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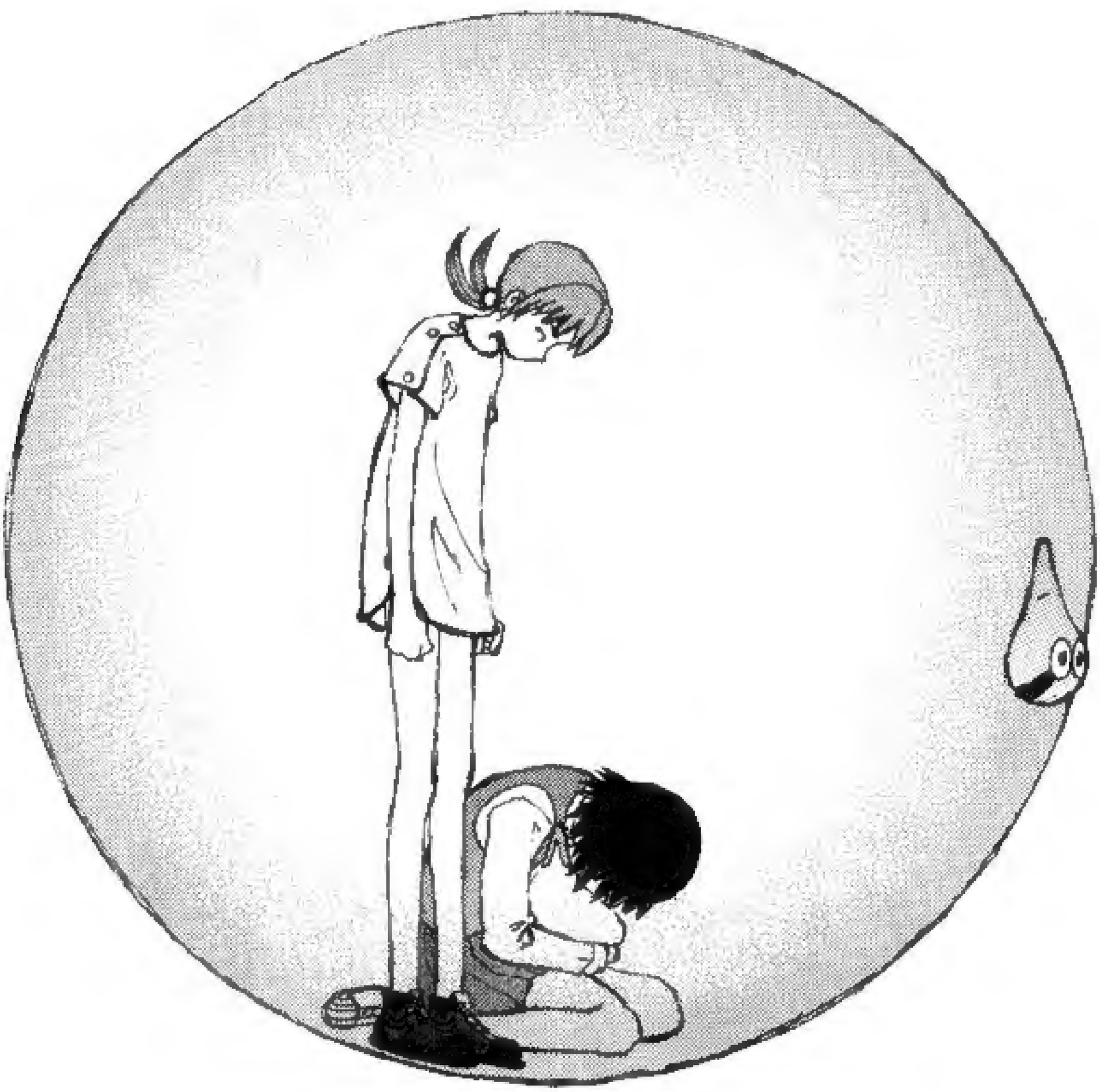
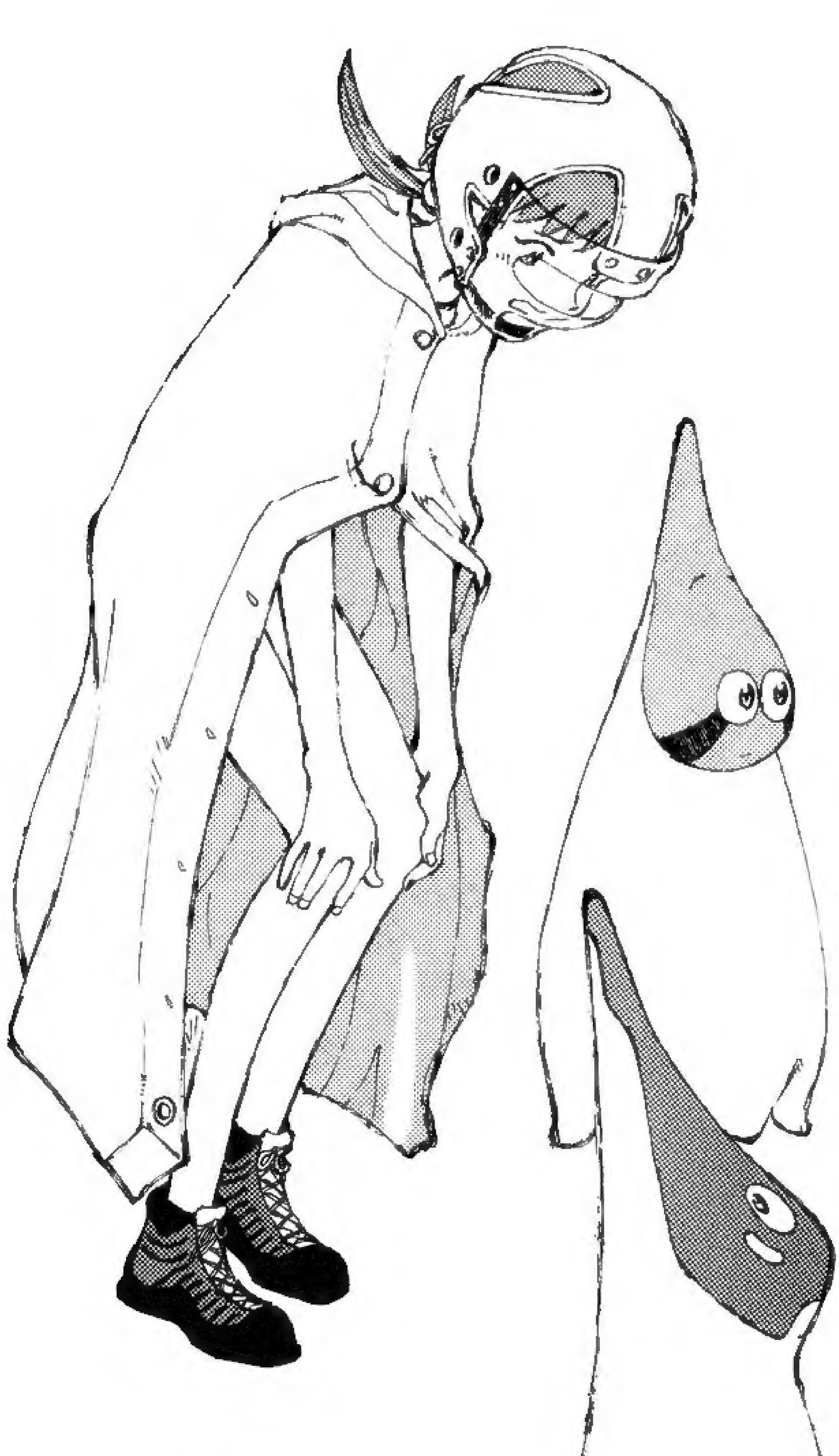
shadow star

彼なる星珠たる子





shadow star

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A FLOWER'S FRAGRANCE

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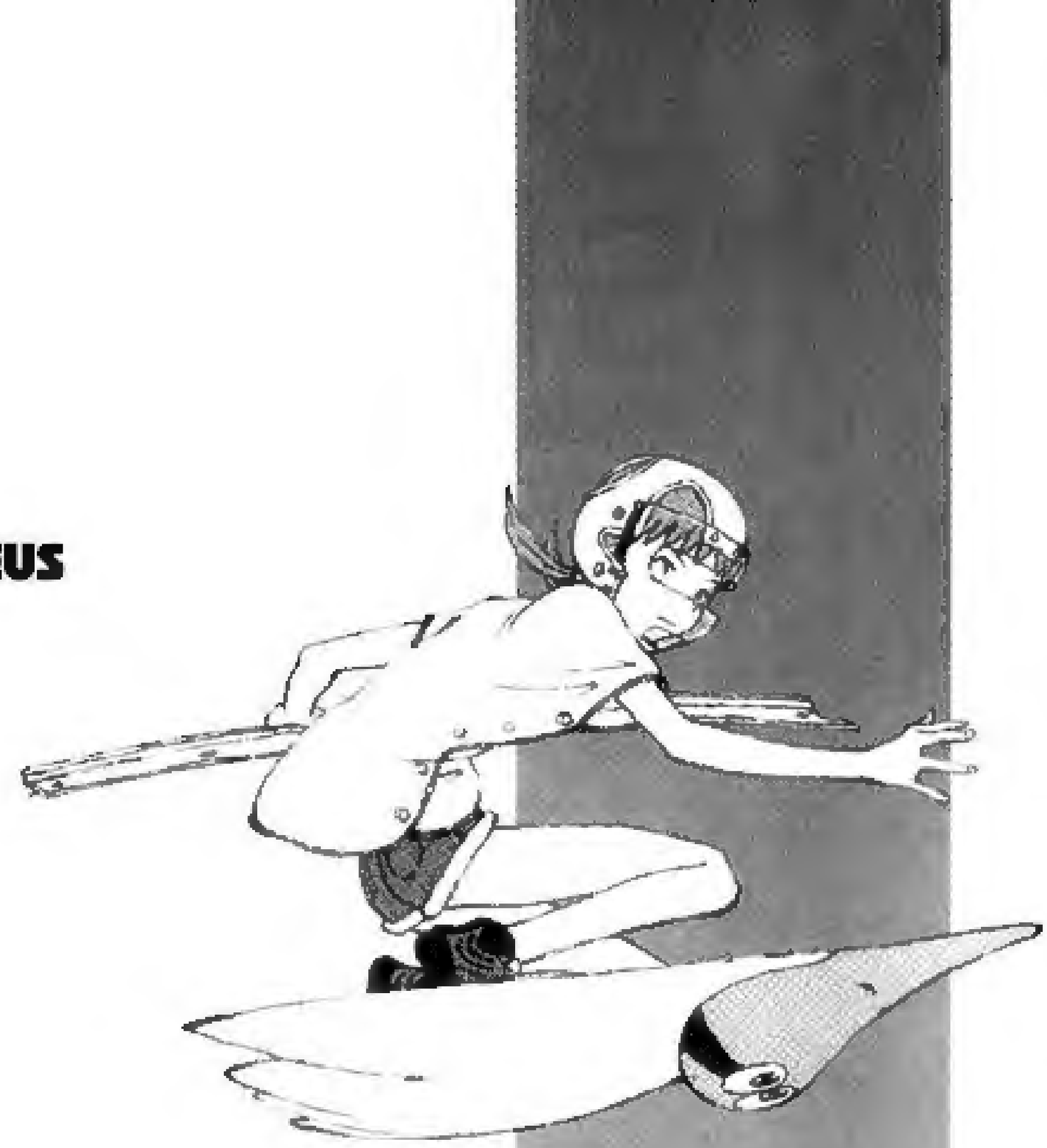

SHADOW STAR Vol. 5: A FLOWER'S FRAGRANCE
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A FLOWER'S FRAGRANCE...

YOU BETTER BE *RIGHT* THIS TIME!!

GOD, YOU'RE SO *STUPID!* HOW COULD YOU GET *LOST?!*

THEN, HEY...

...YOU LOOK FOR IT.

WHY SHOULD I DO SUCH A THING...?

HMPH. WHY DON'T YOU HURRY UP AND GET A DRIVER'S LICENSE?

BECAUSE, "LADY SATOMI," I'M TOO YOUNG TO GET ONE!

THE LAW IS THE LAW.

BUT I COULD GET A MOTOR-CYCLE LI-CENSE...

BRUPP

NO WAY!

I *HATE* THOSE DIRTY THINGS.

BESIDES, I'D HAVE TO HANG ON TO *YOU*, KAZUYUKI.

AND... H-HOLDING YOU BETWEEN MY LEGS...

GOD, HOW *HUMILI-ATING.*

NOBLE LADIES RIDE HORSES, DON'T THEY?

HI-HO!

GIDDY-UP!

OH, *HORSES.*

THAT'S *DIFFER-ENT!*

HMPH!

MAN, I DON'T GET HER...

HEY... I WAS WONDER-ING.

ABOUT KOMORI'S MOTHER.

NAOZUMI *KNEW*... DIDN'T HE?

SO...?

BUT HE JUST LEFT HER THERE...

...KNOW-ING SHE'D DIE.

DOES IT MATTER?

ARE YOU LOSING YOUR NERVE, KAZUYUKI?

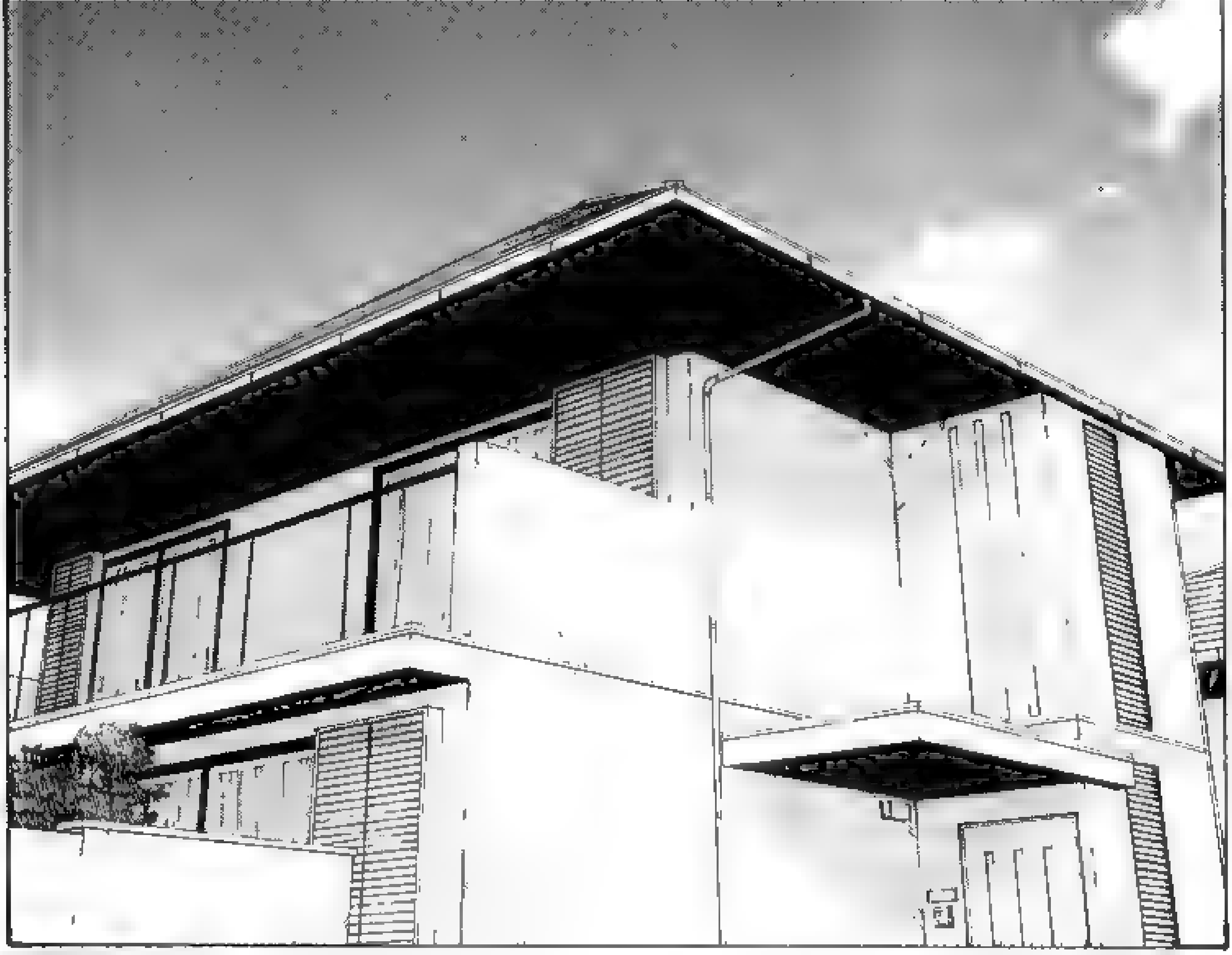
IF THAT'S THE CASE...

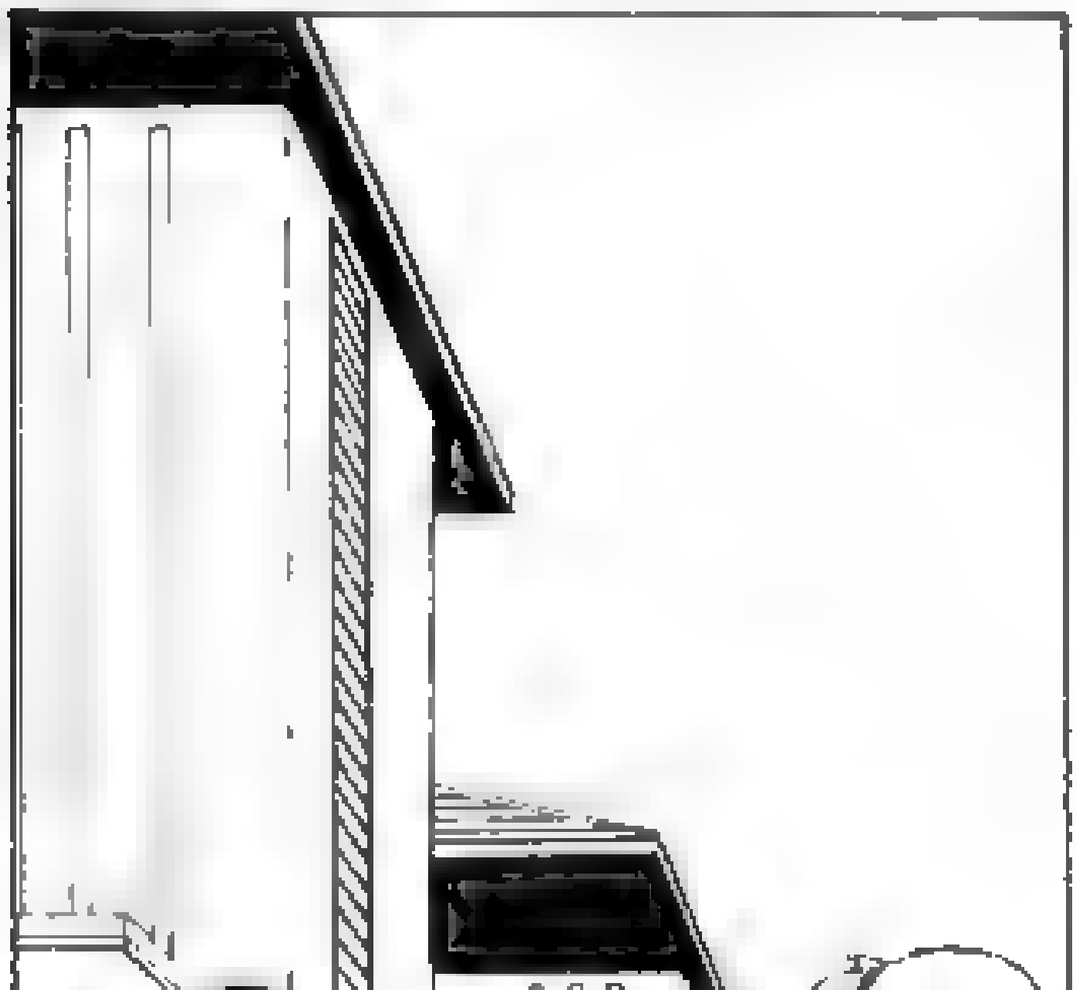
...YOU CAN JUST GO *HOME.*

WHAT'S *YOUR* PROBLEM ?!

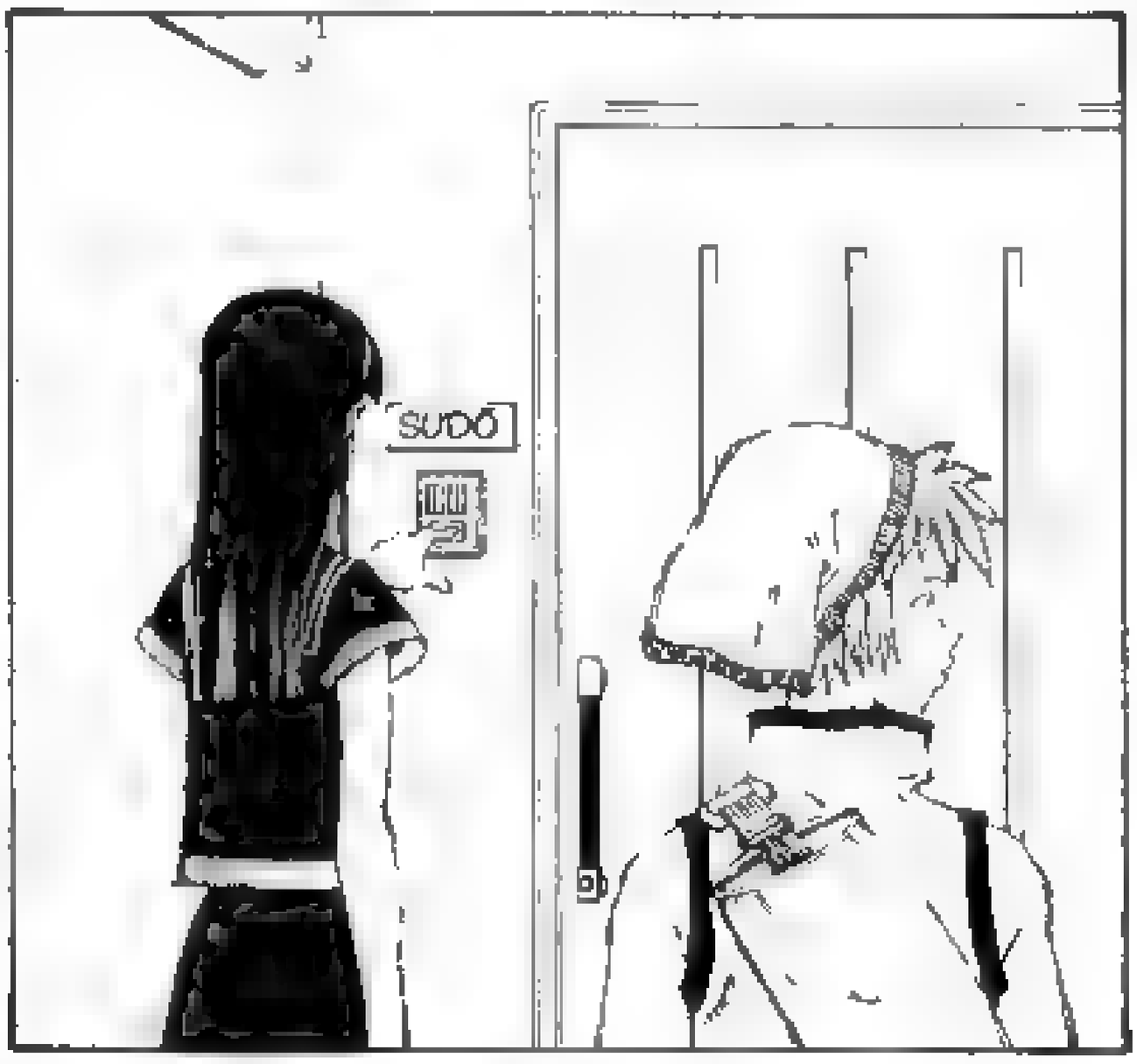
OH, I WAS JUST WONDERING WHERE YOU'D GO IF I DID.

SH... ***SHUT UP!!*** GET BACK HERE AND TAKE ME THERE, *RIGHT NOW!!*





HMM... OKAY.
I'M PRETTY SURE THIS IS THE PLACE.


SUDÓ

COME IN.

KCHAK

?? THERE'S...

...THERE'S *NOTHING* HERE!

I DON'T NEED ANY-THING.

WELL, SATOMI ...?

I... I DID EXACTLY AS YOU SAID.

USING *AMAPOLA* FOR SUCH A THING... *HMPH.*

I HAVE HER CONFINED RIGHT AT THIS VERY *MOMENT.*

THAT *PATHETIC EXCUSE* FOR A GIRL...

HUH? WHAT'S GOING ON?

SORRY. I DIDN'T TELL YOU YET.

I HAD SATOMI KIDNAP A GIRL.

WHO? WHY...?

I PICKED HER UP IN FRONT OF KOMORI'S HOUSE.

I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE SHE MAY BE A *BEARER*.

GOD, SHE'S A *USELESS-LOOKING* THING.

WE SHOULD JUST *KILL* *HER*.

PLEASE DON'T TELL ME SHE'S YOUR TYPE, NAOZUMI. I'D BE--

SHAKK

GOOD MORN-ING.

ARE *THESE* THE PEOPLE YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT, NAOZUMI?

WHA --?!

HOW *DARE* YOU! WHY DON'T... *OOH!!*

I DON'T UNDER-STAND. WHY ARE THEY ACTING THAT WAY?

ARE THEY *LOW LEVEL...?*

SO... UH...YOUR *SISTER*, NAOZUMI?

NO.

GET USED TO HER.

AH?! THEN...SHE HAS A DRAGON CHILD?

HER NAME IS *MAMIKO KURI.*

SO... WHEN SHE LEFT TO GO TO SCHOOL THIS MORNING...

...WAS THERE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT HER ACTIONS ...?

WELL... N-NO.

NOT... REALLY.

LOOK, *PLEASE* HURRY UP AND *SEARCH* FOR HER! IT'S *OBVIOUS* SHE'S BEEN KIDNAPPED!

PLEASE *DO* SOME-THING!

COME ON, OFFICER!! THEY FOUND HER BAG LYING RIGHT IN THE *STREET!*

SOMEONE MUST HAVE FORCED HER INTO THEIR CAR AND... AND...!

NO CHANCE SHE RAN AWAY ...?

SHE...

SHE'S N-NOT THAT KIND OF GIRL.

WELL, UH...WAS SHE ACTING STRANGE IN ANY WAY RECENTLY ...?

I *TOLD* YOU, *NO!!*

WHY ARE YOU ASKING THE *SAME THING* AGAIN AND *AGAIN?!*

OKAY, OKAY!

WE NEED YOU TO STAY AT HOME FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

IF YOU HEAR *ANYTHING*, CALL US RIGHT AWAY.

AND IF YOU COULD DO ME A FAVOR...

JUST TO BE SURE, PLEASE CALL ANY PLACE YOUR DAUGHTER MIGHT POSSIBLY HAVE GONE. ALL RIGHT?

中華料理

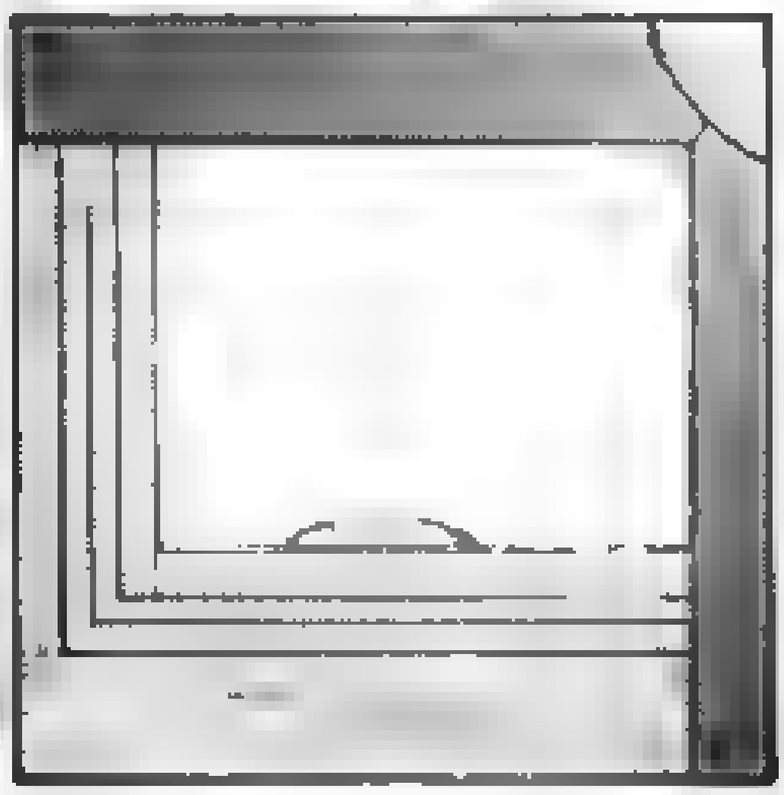
OOOH!! TH-THAT WAS F- FREEZING!

THAT'S IT...

SAY... ISN'T THIS NEAR THE PLACE THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT ON THE NEWS ...?

SHIINA...

....



ONE OF THEIR GANG ...?
NOW WHAT?

TODAY, SATOMI...

...I SHALL HAVE YOU KILL SOME PEOPLE.

NO. *JSDF* SOLDIERS.

WHO...?

THIS GIRL?

OH! THAT NEWS BROAD-CAST ...?

SATOMI CAN'T DO IT *ALONE!!*

C'MON! THAT'S PUSHING IT!

WHERE IS *YOUR* SHADOW DRAGON, KAZUYUKI?

UH... IN HOKKAIDO, TRAINING.

LIKE YOU TOLD... ....

?! YOU SET THIS UP...?

THEN I'LL SHOW YOU OUR *POWER*...

...*AMAPOLA* AND I!

SO YOU STAY *OUT OF THIS*, KAZUYUKI!

BUT YOU'LL BE UP AGAINST THE *JSDF*...!

"AND MAYBE EVEN... *KOMORI*."

I HOPE IT *IS* HIM.

THAT WOULD SUIT ME JUST *FINE*.

"I DON'T THINK HE IS INVOLVED.

"IF KOMORI WAS ON THEIR SIDE, THEY WOULDN'T GO TO ALL THIS TROUBLE."

THEY JUST WOULD COME TO US DIRECTLY...

...THOSE PEOPLE IN SUITS.

I DISLIKE THE WAY THEY ATTEMPTED TO USE THOSE MEDIA IMAGES OF *PUSH DAGGER* TO MANIPULATE US.

SO THIS WILL BE A LITTLE *PUNISH-MENT.*

PLUS A LITTLE TEST FOR ME.

"AND ALSO...

..."...FOR *AKIRA SAKURA.*"

DOES SHE REALLY HAVE ONE...?

I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE.

BUT...

...IF SHE *ISN'T* LINKED TO A SHADOW DRAGON...

...THEN IT WON'T REALLY MATTER IF SHE DIES.

OKAY....

THEN I'LL START.

I SHALL BE *WATCH-ING*...

...SA-TOMI OZAWA.

YAWN

YAWN

I GUESS IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO JUST KNOCK THAT THING OUT.

THE PERSON BEHIND IT...

AHH, ENOUGH THINKING!!

IT'S NOT MY STRONG POINT

OKAY, LET'S GO.

HOSHI-MARU ...?

THAT... *THING*, PLEASE.

SHHSSH

SURPRISE

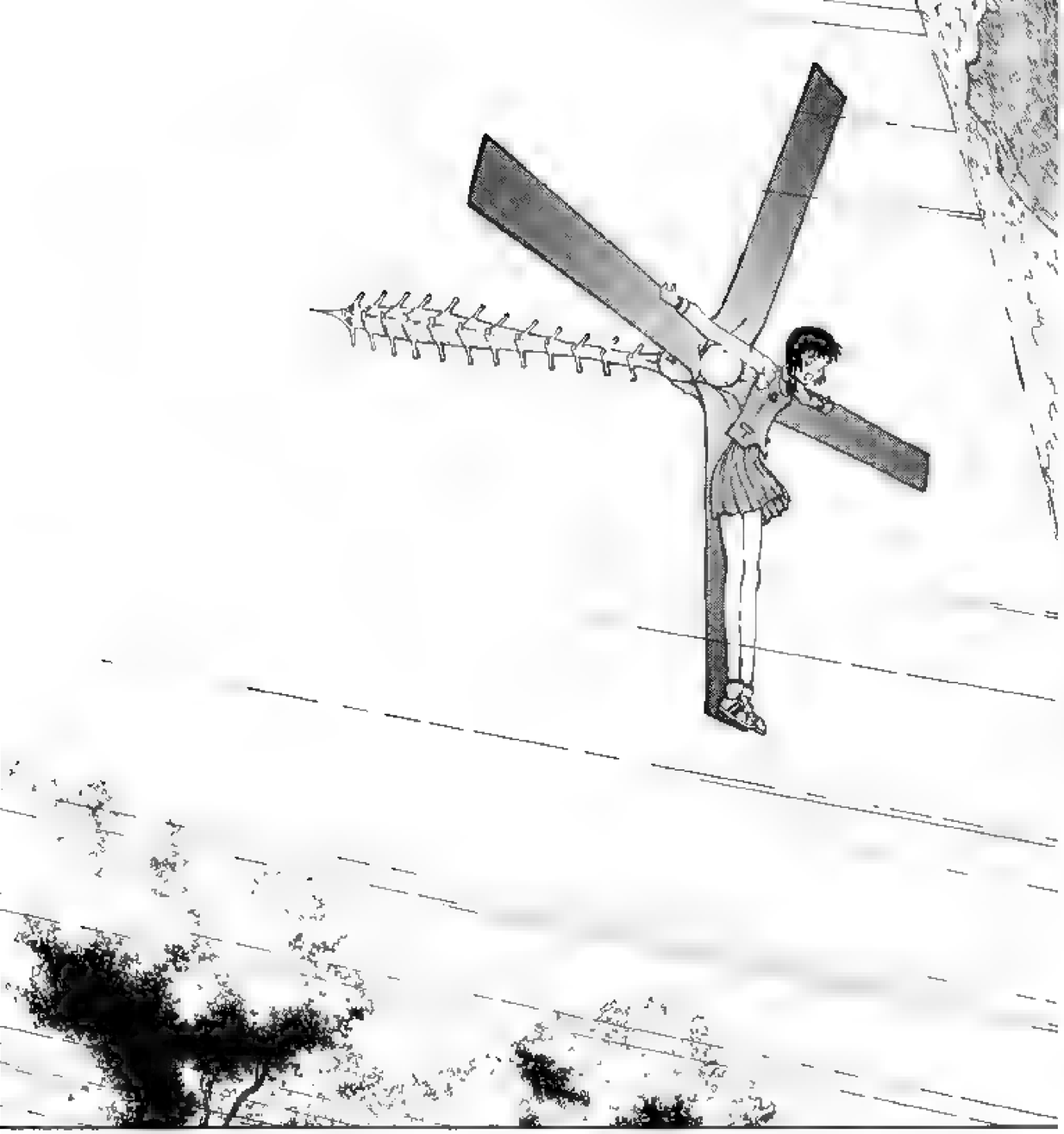
PULPE

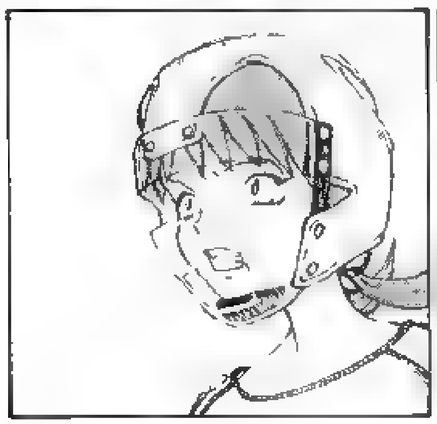
HOSHI-
MARU,
YOU--

!

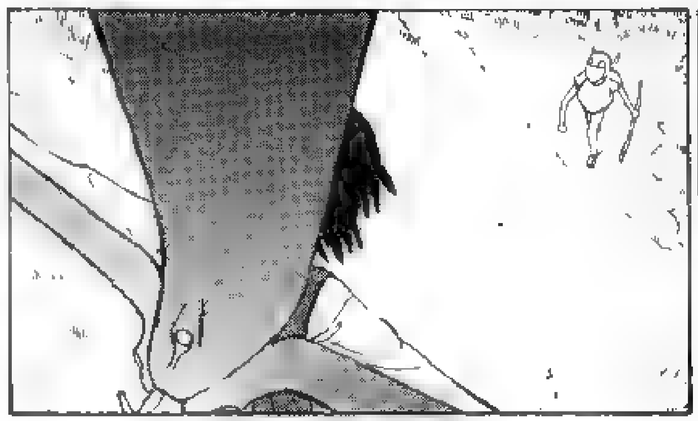
ENSOFI
WHAT
IS IT?

SLICE

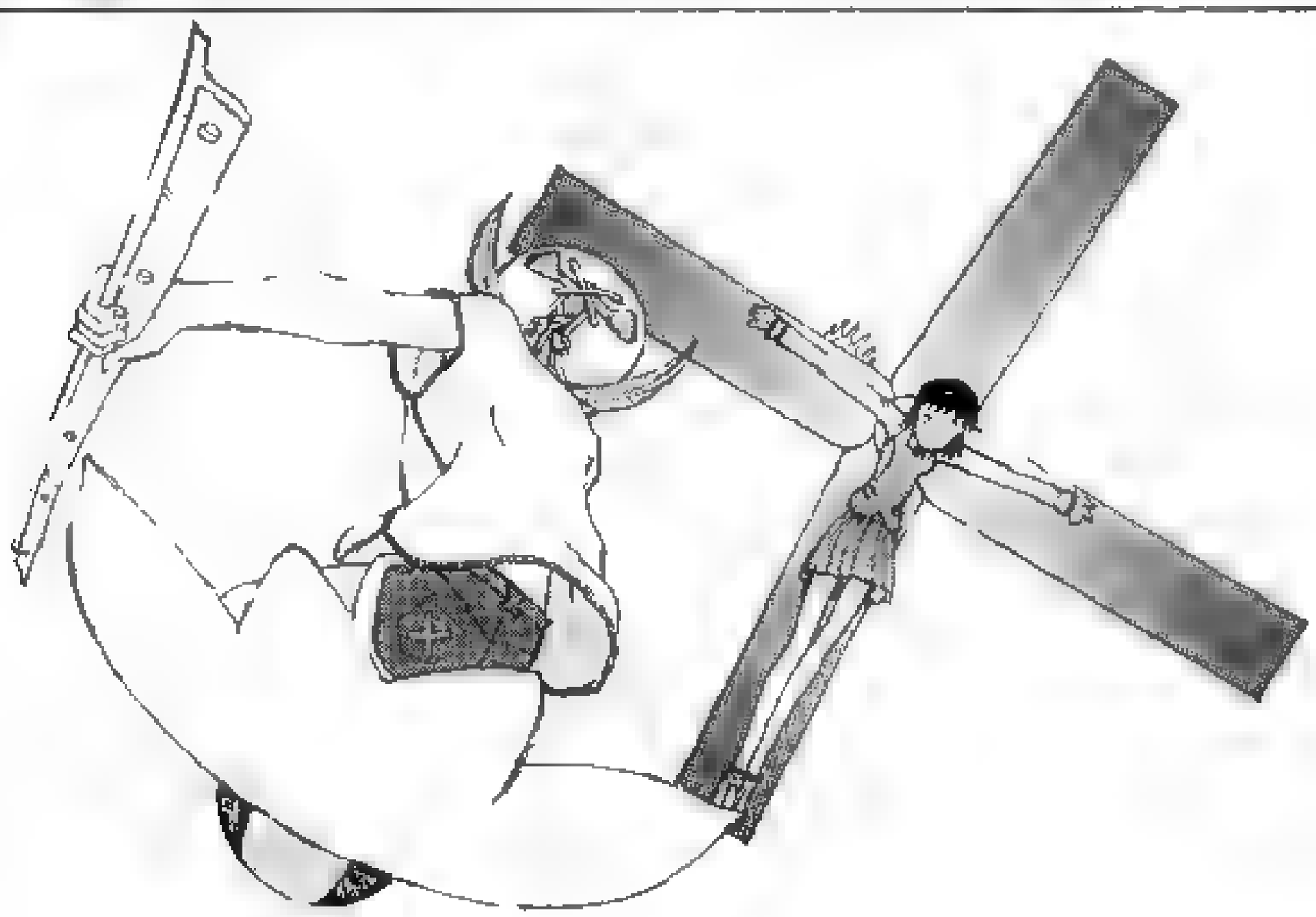




AKIRA!



LET'S GO, HOSHI!



A SHADOW DRAGON!!
AND... WHAT ...?
SOME KID ...?
HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

AKIRA!

AH. AN UNEXPECTED PLAYER.

HEY...

WHAT'S *THAT?*

YOU LET GO--

--OF HER!!

SMACK

PANTS

AH!!

WHOOSH

WHOO

OKAY, HOSHI!

ONCE MORE!!

HYAA!!

KING

WHY YOU... ...!

FOO

?!

AH...
NO!

AUGGH!

AKIRA...!!

HOSHI-MARU!! DROP ME ON THAT TREE!

YOU GO CATCH AKIRA!

FLOAT

AAH!!

WSSSH

SKSSH

WHOOD

KRAK

FWIP

SKSH

KSHK
KSHK

DID YOU GET IT ON TAPE?

I ROLLED THE CAM-ERA...

...BUT I DUNNO... PRETTY FAR.

FOR THIS LENS...

THEY WERE *PEOPLE*.

I'M SURE OF IT.

KRAK

OWWOOH!

AKIRA ...?

HOSHI ...?

Y... YOU ...!

ARE YOU ONE OF THAT KOMORI GUY'S GANG, TOO?

AH, *NOW* I REMEM-BER!

YOU'RE THAT BRAT...

...FROM THE STORE.

PER-FECT. JUST THE ONE...

...FOR MY FIRST KILL.

HUH?

SLICE

BLAM

SQUEAK

WHAT ?!

IT MISSED!

OH, WELL.

I HAVE LOTS MORE BUL-LETS ...

SLRCH

UH... ....

CHIK

WHAA!

AAHH!

W-WAIT A SEC!

KLIK

WHY

SPAK

FDD

NNGH!

AH...?

WHAT?

BLAM

FRAK

AUHH!!

WH... WHAT HAP- PENED?

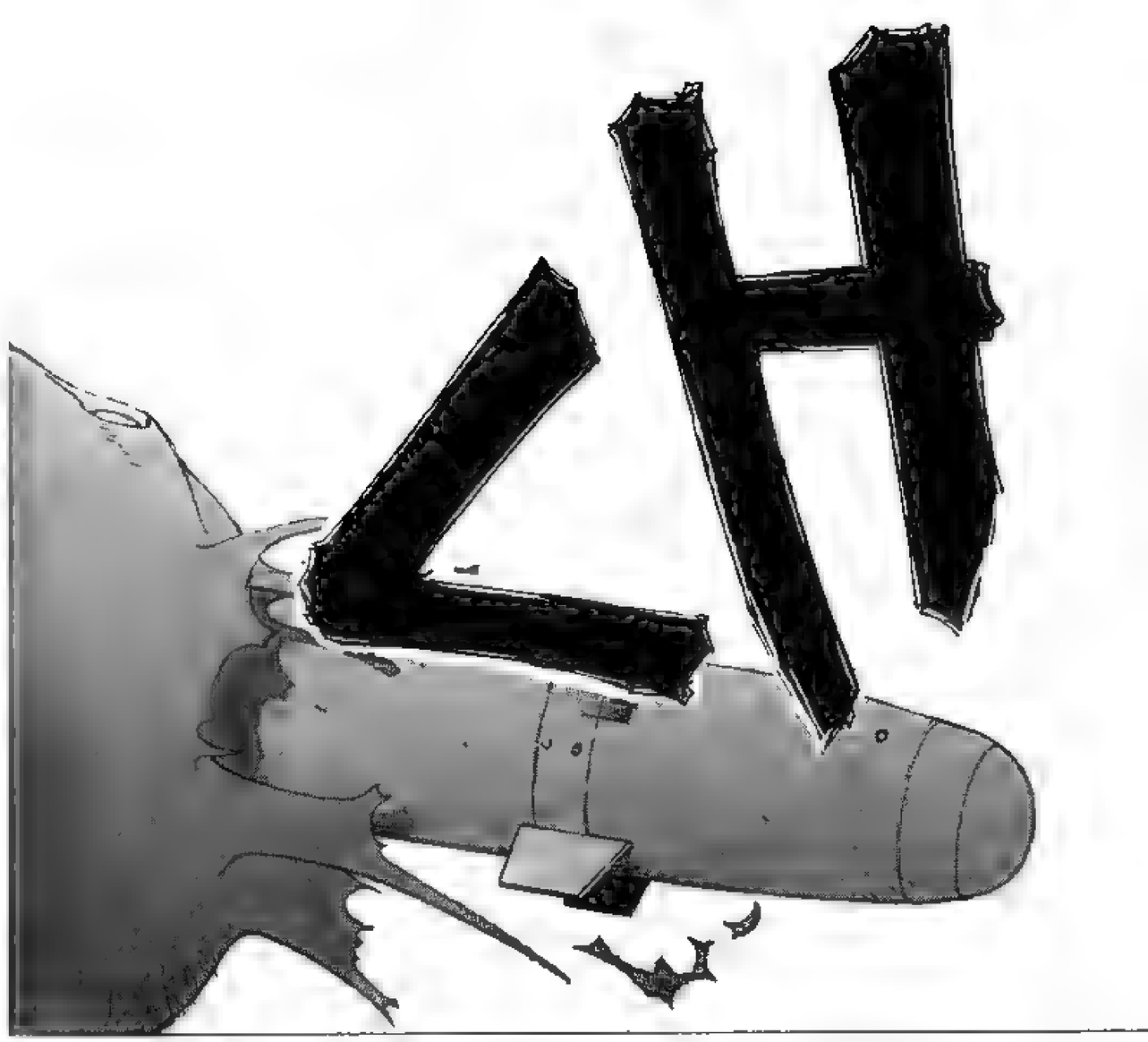
BOTH OF SATOMI'S HANDGUNS HAVE EXPLODED.

DAMN IT, TAKANO! WHAT IS THIS CRAP?!

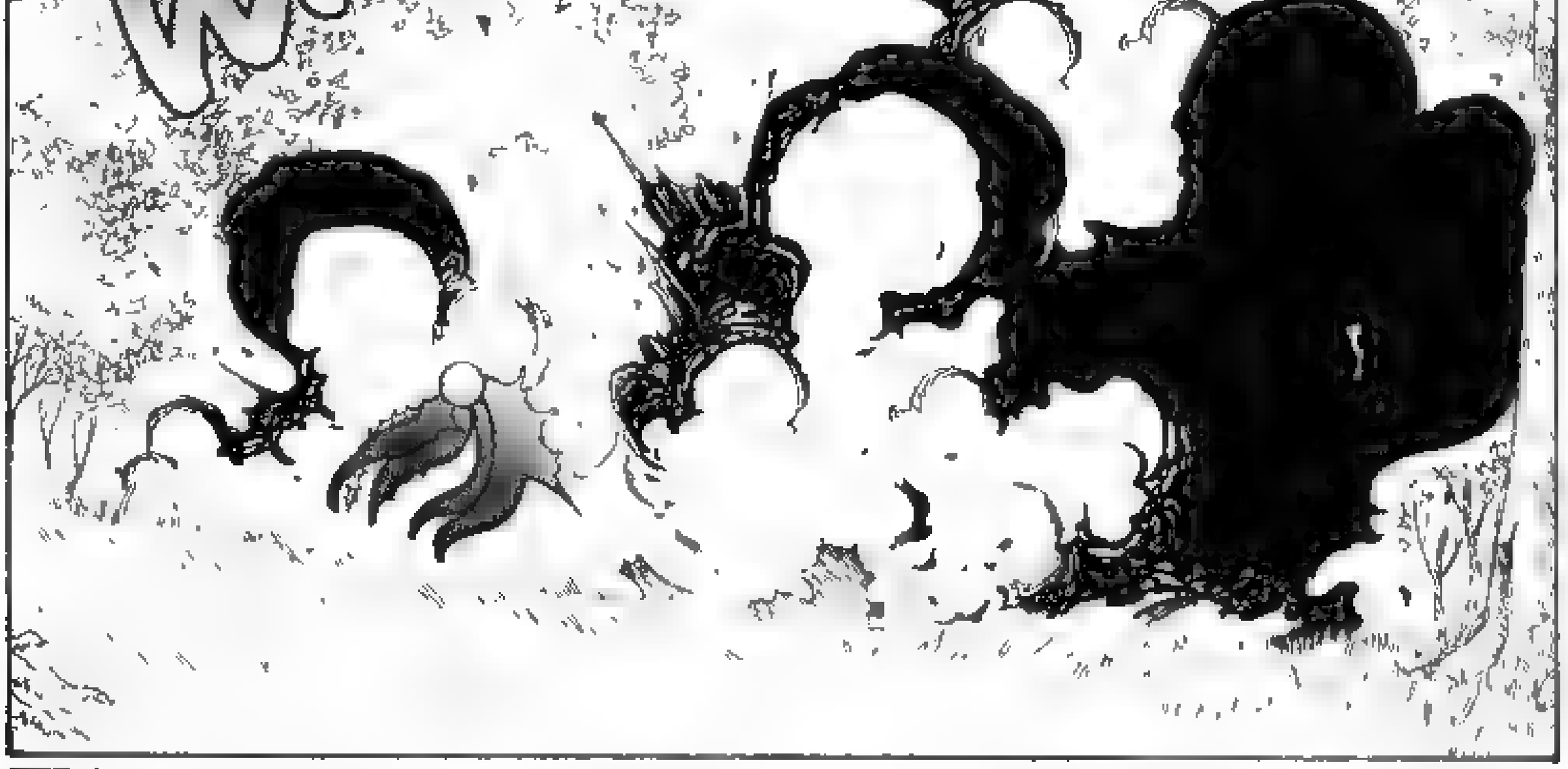
UH... ER... SORRY.

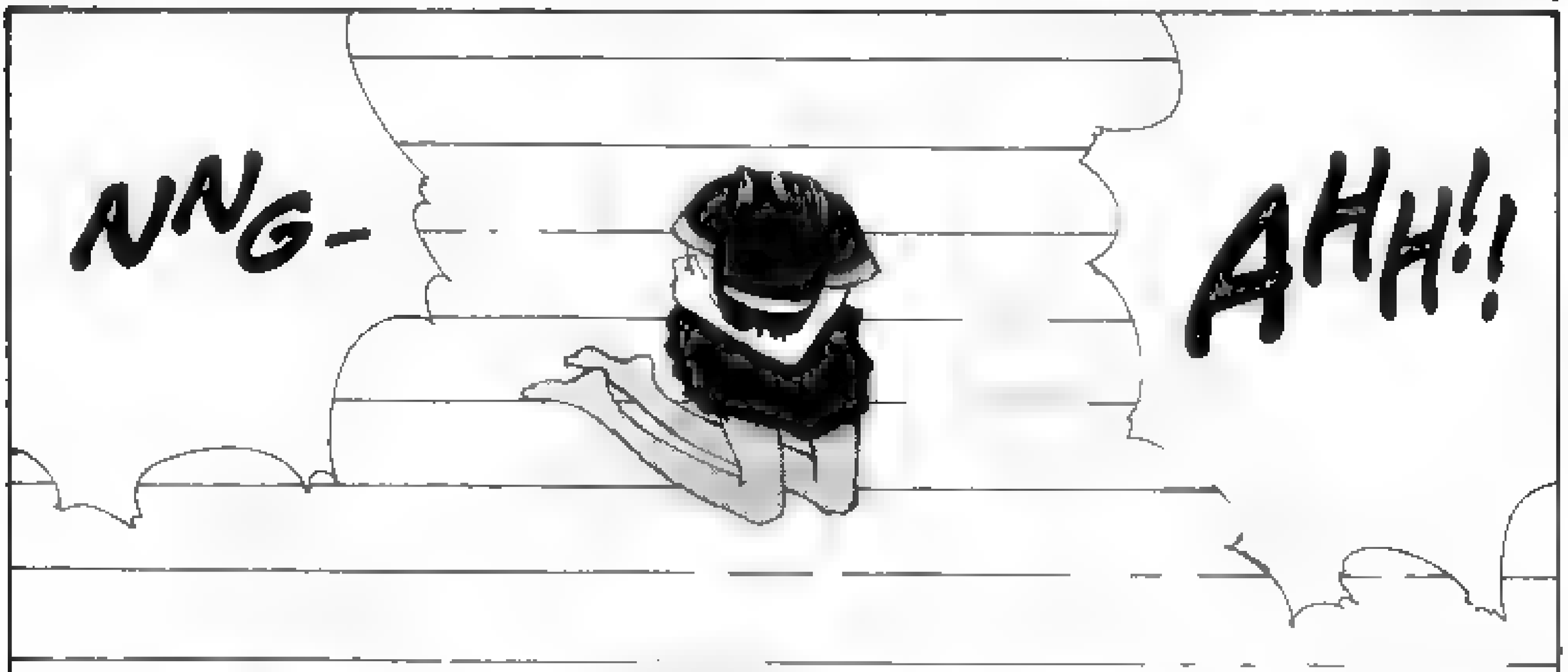
SATOMI. YOU'RE UNDER ATTACK.

EH?



WHOOM





SOFT TARGET, SIR. DIRECT HIT, BUT THE WARHEAD DID NOT TRIGGER.

SIR! THE GROUND UNITS ARE IN POSITION.

THERE'S NO TURNING BACK NOW.

WRAP IT UP BEFORE THE MEDIA HAS TIME TO MOVE IN.

LEAVE THE LINE OPEN TO GENERAL HODA AT THE *JASDF*.

MIYAKO...

...YOU STILL THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH CALLING THIS A "POLICE ACTION" ...?

SATOMI!!

WHA... WHAT... ....?

THE *JSDF.*

PROBABLY AN ANTI-TANK MISSILE FROM AN ATTACK HELICOPTER.

A *TOW...*

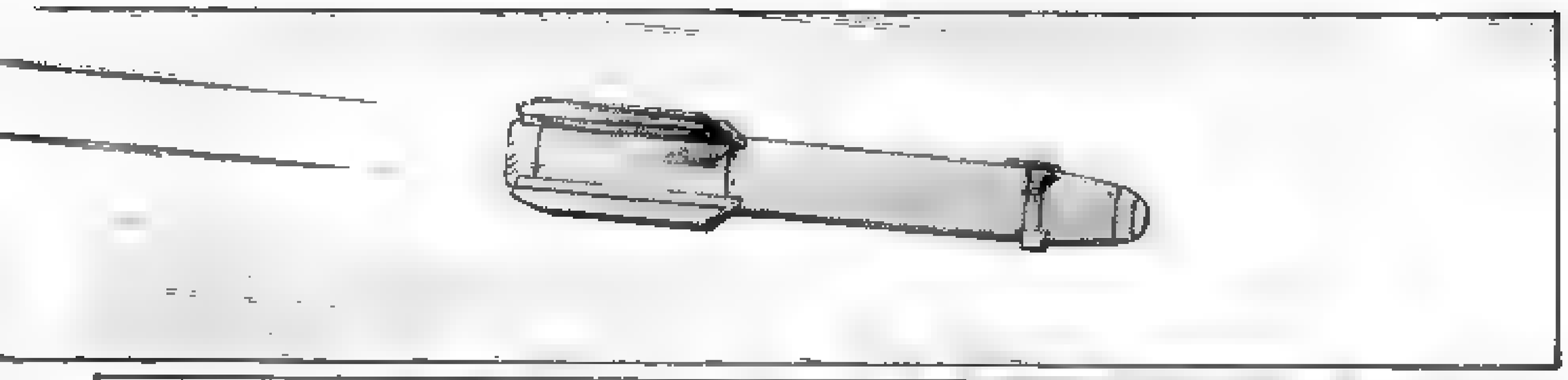
NO, WAIT... A *HELL-FIRE!*

SATOMI, GET *OUT* OF THERE!!

SH... SHUT UP AND LEAVE ME *ALONE!!*

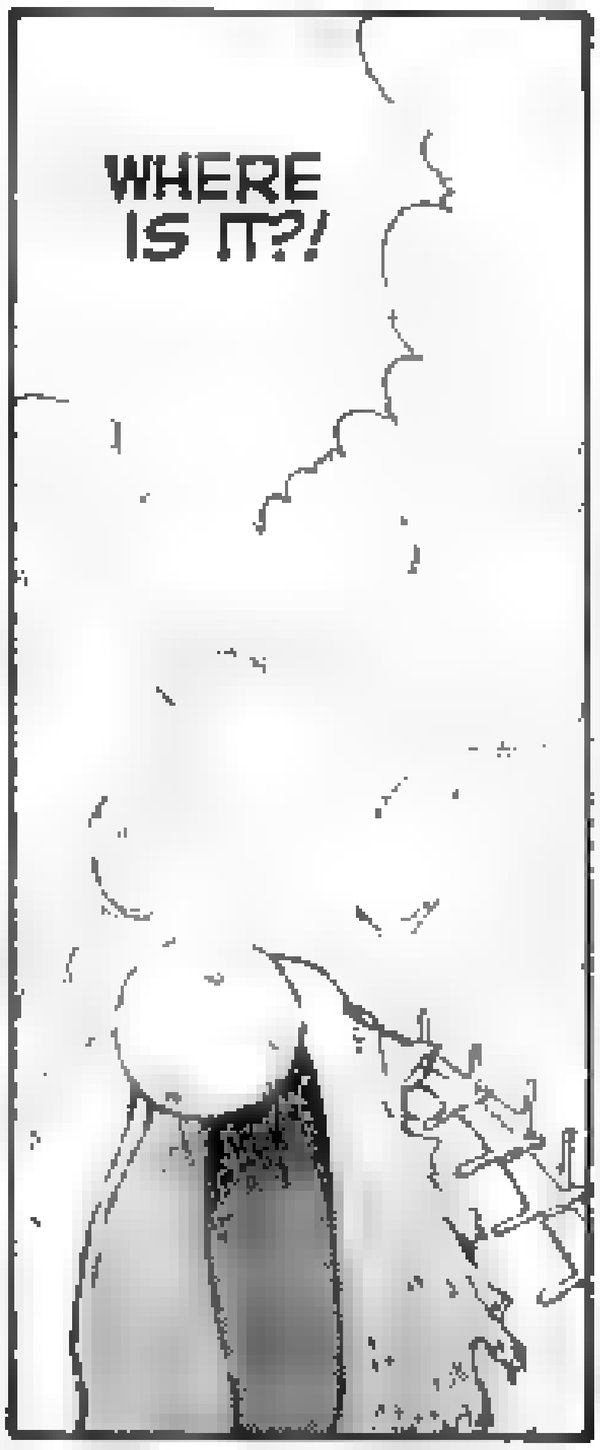
THOSE ARE *BAD NEWS,* MAN.

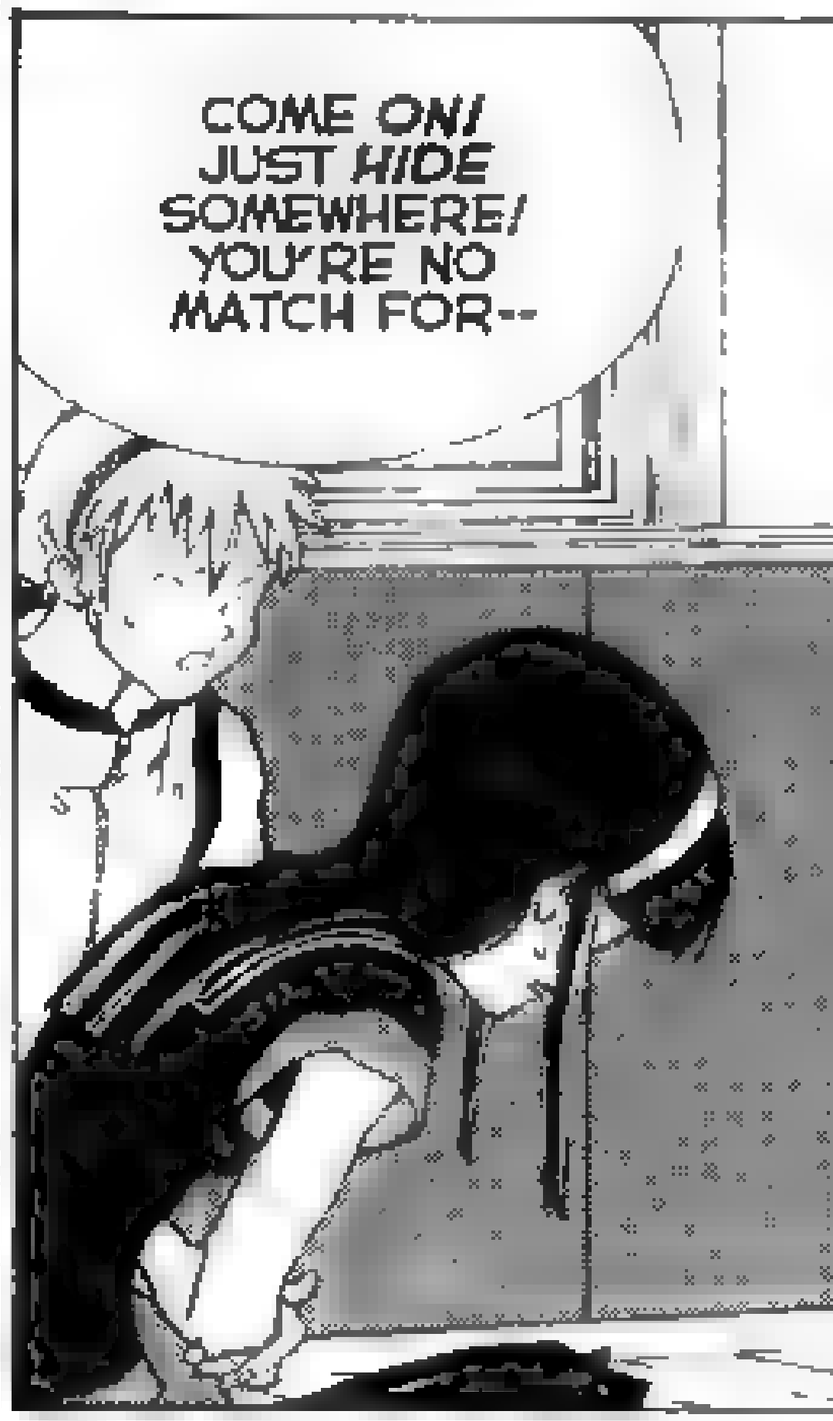
IF THEY USE ONE WITH A FRAGMENT-ATION WAR-HEAD...



BOOM

HNNG!


WHERE IS IT?!


COME ON! JUST HIDE SOMEWHERE! YOU'RE NO MATCH FOR--

SHUT. UP.

RED SHIELD, THIS IS TIGER SHARK ONE.

WE'VE LOST OUR LASER LOCK ON THE TARGET.

ROGER, TIGER SHARK ONE. ATTEMPT TO REACQUIRE TARGET.

WARLOCK THREE AND FOUR, SUPPORT TIGER SHARK ONE. WARLOCK ONE AND TWO, HOLD POSITIONS.

WHUP

WHUP

WHUP

THE SELF-DEFENSE FORCE...

I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING.

BETTER HURRY AND FIND AKIRA AND GET OUT OF HERE!

GEEZ, WHERE IS SHE...?

HOSHI-MARU ...!

HALT!! DON'T MOVE!

PLACE YOUR HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD AND...

HUH ...?

WHA... A KID?

HAVE YOU RECOV-ERED ...?

TH... THEY'LL *PAY* FOR THIS...

SATOMI, LOWER YOUR LINK INTENSITY.

YOUR MIND CAN'T TAKE IT!

NO, KAZUYUKI.

THAT WOULD NOT BE ACCEPT-ABLE.

I NEED HER TO *MASTER* HER SHADOW DRAGON.

D-DON'T WORRY— I *KNOW.*

I REFUSE TO BE USED BY MY SHADOW DRAGON ANY MORE!

RED SHIELD, THIS IS *WARLOCK THREE* WE'RE CONTINUING OUR SWEEP.

WARLOCK FOUR IS TAKING WINGMAN POSITION TO TIGER SHARK ONE..

GOOD. GIVES US A BALANCE BETWEEN AIR-TO-AIR AND AIR-TO-GROUND...

DATA COMING IN FROM *AWACS,* SIR.

WE HAVE PROBABLE TARGET ACQUISITION.

HEADING 35 DEGREES FROM *TIGER SHARK ONE, NOE,* 3000 YARDS AND CLOSING ...

WILL THIS DO?

HAVE TO. IT'S THE ONLY EFFECTIVE WEAPON YOU'VE ACQUIRED.

JUST DON'T STAY IN ONE PLACE. KEEP MOVING, AND DRAW THEM INTO CLOSE COMBAT SO THEY CAN'T USE THEIR MISSILES.

ALSO, TRY TO STAY TO THEIR EAST. THERE'S AN URBAN AREA OFF THAT WAY...

...SO THEY'LL HAVE TO RESTRICT THEIR FIRE.

AND YOU SHOULD—

I'M SORRY, DEAR.

I CAN'T [illegible] ALL THAT STUFF!

I DON'T THINK I CAN HEAR YOU OVER THE RADIO RIGHT NOW!

[illegible] JUNK [illegible]

IF I'D JUST SIT IT DOWN [illegible] WHITE LINES ON THE [illegible]

NEVER MIND SWEETIE

SHUSH

VVVRRRRTTT

SPAK

BKOOM

NNGH!

KSSH

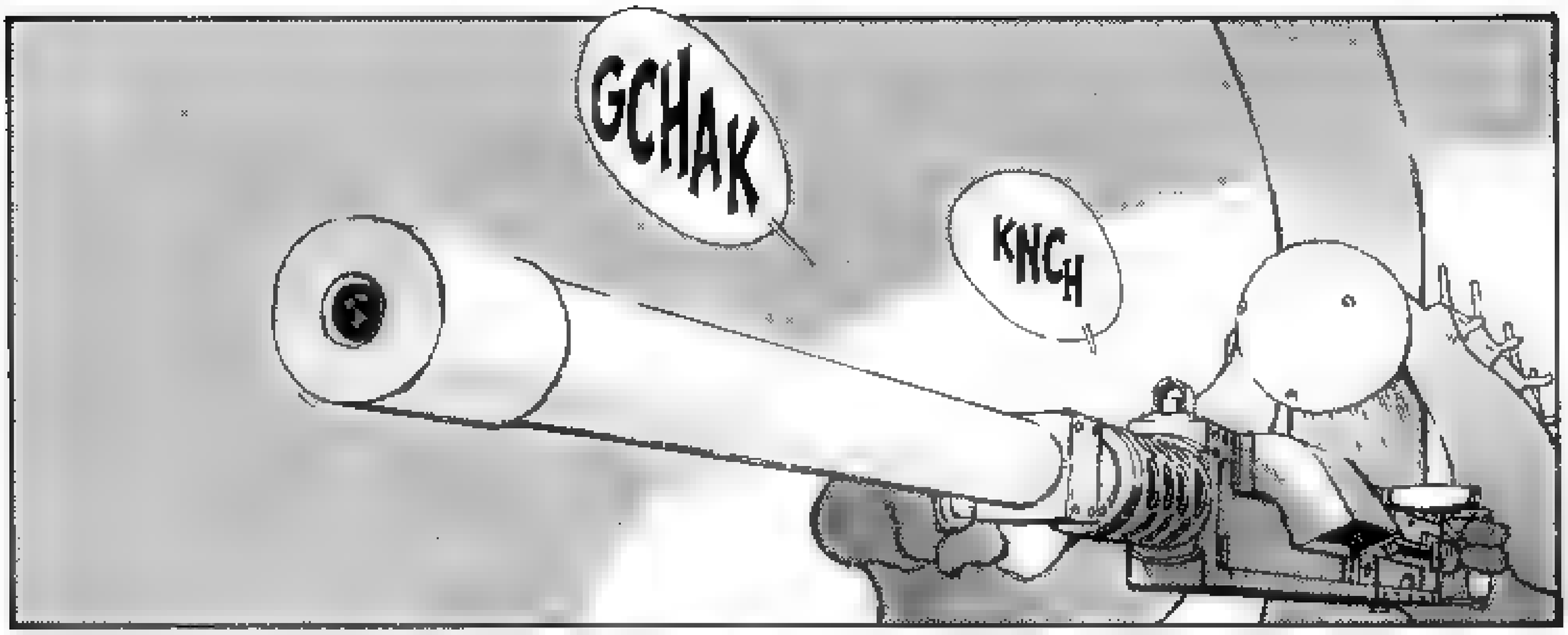
TARGET DOWN.

MOVING TO CONFIRM KILL.

AAH!

PAYBACK
IS A BITCH,
ISN'T IT...?

KLIK


GCHAK
KNCH

HUH ...?
WHAT TH--?!
CHIK

VVRTTT
SPAKKA
SPAKKA

AUGH!

DTTT

VRT

SPAK

SPAK

SPAK

WAR-LOCK FOUR, THIS IS RED SHIELD.

FALL BACK-- TIGER SHARK ONE HAS AN AAM LOCK.

ROGER, RED SHIELD.

VECTORING SOUTH, WILL HOLD AT 1000 YARDS.

OUR VULCAN NEEDS TIME TO COOL, ANYWAY

SATOMI ...!!

AAA... AHH!

NGG...

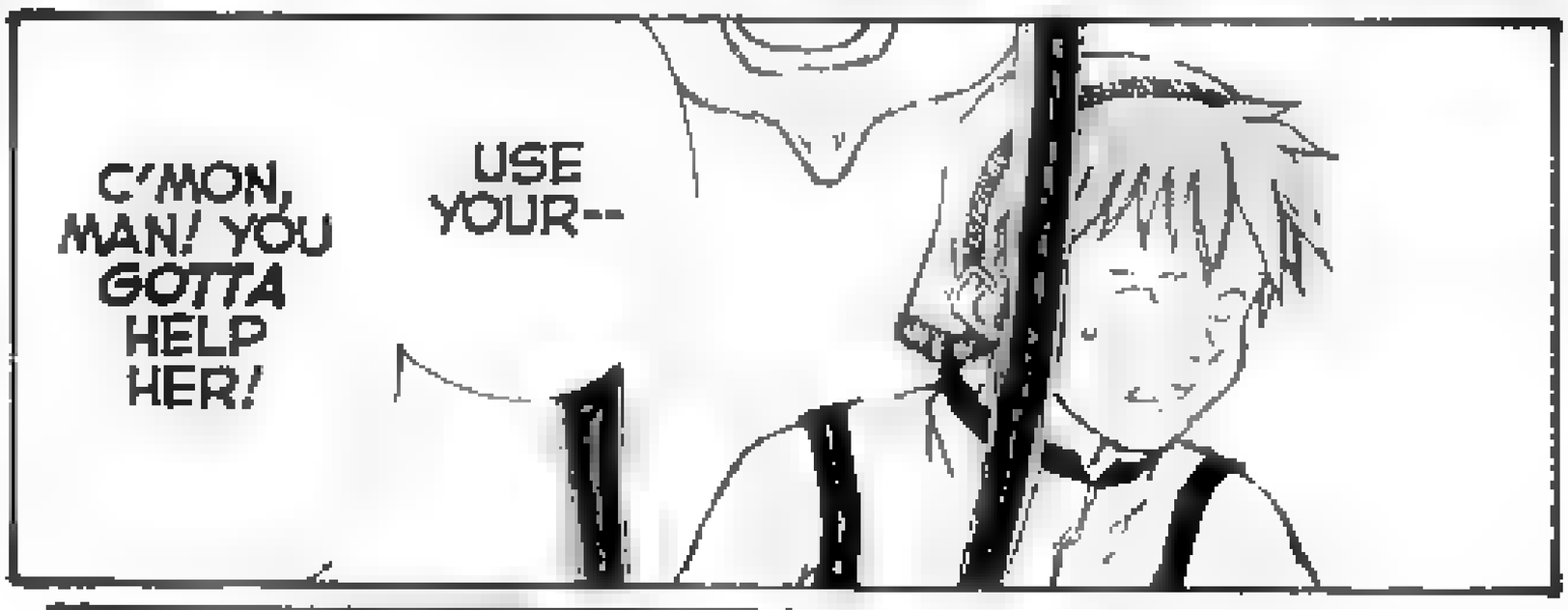
NAO-ZUMI! DO--

AS THINGS STAND, IT SEEMS WE CAN'T USE SATOMI'S WEAPONS.

ANKOSHI

THE END

AUGHH!!
HKK


C'MON, MAN! YOU GOTTA HELP HER!
USE YOUR--

DRAGON CHILD...?
NO. SHE MUST PREVAIL... OR FACE BRAIN DEATH.

SATOMI, LISTEN!!

YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY LOST YOUR *SITUATIONAL AWARENESS!* DISENGAGE AND CLEAR THE AREA!

I WISH YOU GOOD LUCK...

...MISS OZAWA.

ОДНИМ

ВЗЯЛИ

ЖЕНЩИНУ!

УБЕЙ!

KANGG

THOK

CHKK

eCHOK

FWDD

PWOD
RED SHIELD, WARLOCK FOUR IS GOING DOWN, GRIDREF G44!
ROGER, TIGER SHARK TWO. RESCUE UNIT EN ROUTE.
WARLOCK THREE, PROVIDE AIR SUPPORT. TARGET STATUS?

IT APPEARS IMMOBILIZED, *RED SHIELD.*

MONITOR THE TARGET, *TIGER SHARK TWO.*

GROUND UNITS, ADVANCE TO GRIDREF L44.

BRRRMB

MOVE OUT!

GRNN

GRNN

PREPARE TO CAPTURE TARGET!

OKAY, GET--

AKIRA ...?!

SO IT'S *AKIRA*, HMM?

I FINALLY KNOW YOUR NAME.

OH!

SHE WOULDN'T SAY A THING. VERY ANNOYING.

AND YOU ARE ...?

KAZUYUKI.

Y... YES?

GO TO THE SHOPPING MALL DOWN THE STREET AND GET HER SOME CLOTHES. NOTHING FANCY.

I'LL CLEAN HER UP AND PUT THESE CLOTHES IN THE WASH.

OKAY, BUT...

I MEAN, ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T MIND...

I AM BEYOND THAT SORT OF DISTASTE, KAZUYUKI.

BESIDES, KNOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND SATOMI, PERHAPS IT IS FOR THE BEST.

FURTHER-MORE...

...I AM BEYOND *THAT* SORT OF DESIRE AS WELL.

HUMAN SEXUALITY IS NO LONGER OF ANY CONCERN TO ME.

MY NAME IS LT. WATANABE.

NICE TO MEET YOU.

I HAVE A FEW THINGS I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT ABOUT, BUT...

...IT SEEMS YOUR FRIEND DOESN'T MUCH LIKE ME.

HOWEVER ...I HAVE A SUSPICION YOU AND I CAN TALK.

WHAT ...?

I... I'M SORRY.

HUH ...?

SHAKK

HEY!!

AKIRA ...?!

AHH!

KTAK

OH MY GOD!! AKIRA!!

CHIK

AKIRAAA!!

BLAM

HFF

HAH

HHFF

WH... WHERE'S NAO... ZUMI...?

THAT WAS FAST, KAZUYUKI.

UH...UM... HERE'S THE STUFF.

WHUD

THANK YOU.

UM...

I... I'LL LEAVE IT HERE.

IS THIS ALL ...?

WELL... UH...

I KINDA CHICK-ENED OUT ON THE UNDER-WEAR.

THE... UH... CASHIER WAS A GIRL...

WELL, YOU HAVE TO GO BACK AGAIN ANYWAY.

HUH? WHY?

SORRY, BUT...

...SHE'S HAVING HER PERIOD.

KLAK

EH...?

AH!

NO...
NOOO
!!

A... AKIRA ...?

SMAK

GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF, GIRL!!

LOOK... WHAT YOU TWO ARE CAUGHT UP IN...

WHY YOU ARE HERE...

I CAN'T POSSIBLY KNOW.

I CAN'T COMPREHEND WHAT COULD DRIVE YOU TO ATTEMPT SUCH A THING.

BUT IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO CHOOSE TO DIE...

...THEN SURELY YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO LIVE A LITTLE LONGER, DON'T YOU?

WE DON'T CARRY OUR SIDE-ARMS...

...WITH A BULLET IN THE CHAMBER.

KSHAK

BKAM

WANT IT NOW ...?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE SHOT, MEN. SERGEANT KIBA, CONTACT HEAD-QUARTERS.

ARRANGE TRANSPORT FOR MYSELF AND THESE TWO.

SIR? LIEUTENANT WATANABE'S PLATOON HAS TAKEN TWO INDIVIDUALS INTO CUSTODY.

HE BELIEVES THEY ARE CONNECTED TO THE INCIDENT.

TWO?

ANY I.D.?

NOT YET.

HOWEVER, IT SEEMS THEY'RE BOTH *CHILDREN.*

HMM. REALLY.

CHILDREN AGAIN...

THE *TARGET?*

THE SECOND INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM IS CLOSING NOW. THE ENGINEERING PLATOON IS SETTING UP.

GOOD.

IF THERE'S *ANY* MOVEMENT AT ALL, OPEN FIRE.

DON'T HOLD BACK-- THROW EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT AT IT.

WHAT THE HELL IS IT?

THE FLYBOYS NAILED IT TWICE, 20MM VULCAN AND A MISSILE-- *NO WAY* IT'S STILL ALIVE.

I DUNNO, MAN...I DON'T SEE A MARK ON IT...

HOP IN, GIRLS.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

IT'S PROBABLY NOT A GOOD IDEA TO LET THEM TAKE US IN, BUT...

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

HOSHI-MARU...

NO...I SHOULDN'T MOVE HIM. WHAT NOW...?

!

AH...

AH!

NO ...!

AKIRA? WHAT'S WRONG?

WHUP WHUP WHUP

WHUP
WHUP
WHUP

FINISHED UP ALREADY ...?

SPAK

SPAK

WHKOOM

HOLY SHIT!!

SKRASH

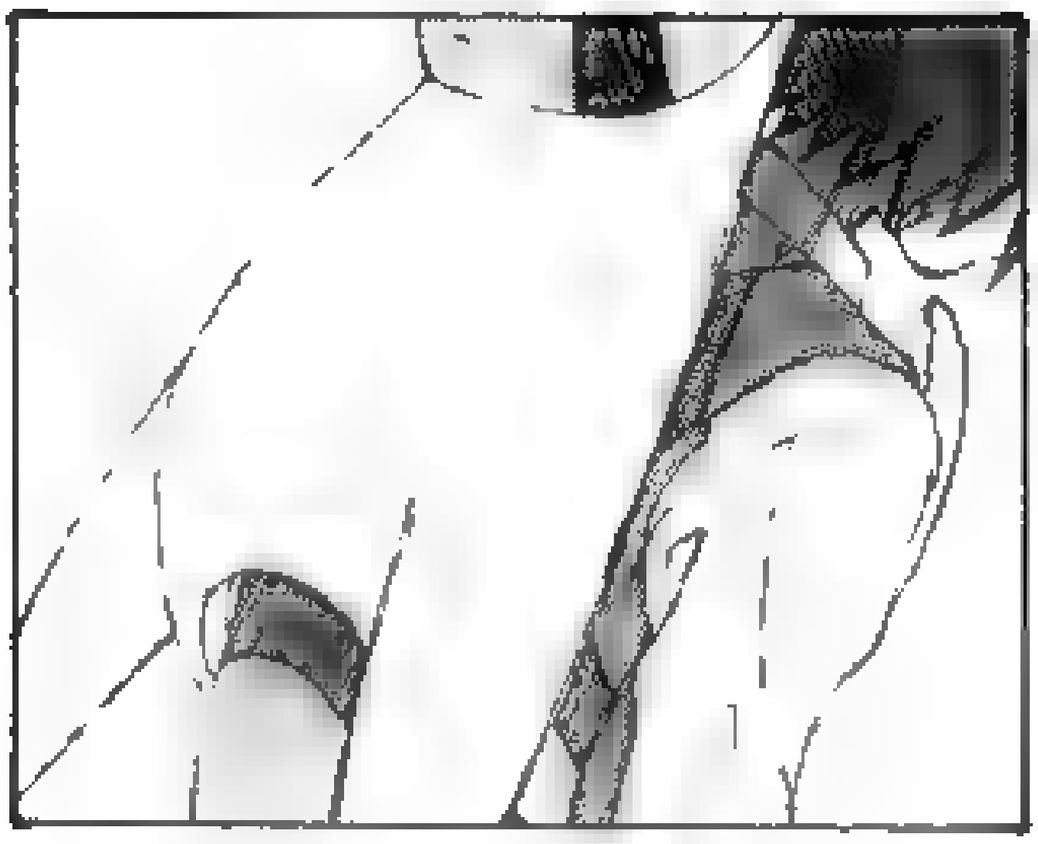
AH!

MY ANGEL...

NO..

HOSHI-
MARU!!

GO
GET IT!!
KILL
IT!!



SHE'S
SHANNA
WARLOCK THREE IS DOWN, SIR!!
NEW BOGEY!!
THE OTHER ONE THAT WAS HIDING ...?
SIR!! THIRD BOGEY CON-FIRMED!!

CHOK

WHPP

FWHOOSH

WHDD

WHDD

WHDD

THAP

SHAKK

D... DON'T MOVE!

IT'S OKAY, SOLDIER.

I DON'T THINK WE'LL BE NEEDING THAT TO DEAL WITH THIS GIRL.

SO... *THAT'S* YOUR SECRET.

H-HE'S COM- ING...

HUH? WHO?

AH!

SO...ARE MY LITTLE PRINCESSES...

...FEEL-ING WELL?

HEY! DON'T --

YOU!!

WHY, YOU--

SO THAT WAS YOURS!!

WASN'T IT?!

WHOA ...!

FWHDD

WRONG.

IT'S NOT MINE.

DRUG STORE

I GOT THE STUFF.

I BOUGHT UNDER-WEAR... AND, UH... THAT... UH...

GOOD, THANK YOU.

AND I... UH...

I ALSO SENT IN...

...MY SHADOW DRAGON *HAINUWELE*.

I BROUGHT HER BACK FROM HOKKAIDO.

UM...

YES. I KNOW.

YOUR SHADOW DRAGON CAN GET BACK HERE IN ABOUT TEN MINUTES, RIGHT?

YEAH. LOOK, I'M SORRY I ACTED ON MY OWN, NAOZUMI.

NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT.

SUCH IS YOUR *ROLE*...

...*KAZUYUKI TAKANO.*

RED SHIELD, THIS IS TIGER SHARK TWO! WARLOCK ONE IS DOWN!

WHAT ...?!

ALL AIR UNITS, CLEAR THE AREA, NOE!! STAND BY FOR VECTORS!

DO NOT, REPEAT, DO NOT ENGAGE THE BOGEY!

BRING IN THE ANTI-AIR GROUND UNITS!

WHAT'S WITH THAT IMMATURE SHADOW DRAGON?

IT'S AN... UNEXPECTED GUEST.

IT SEEMS TO BE LINKED TO A GIRL.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

DON'T BOTHER WITH IT.

WE'LL BE ABLE TO TRACE IT USING *SAKURA*.

OKAY... THEN I'LL RECOVER *AMAPOLA* AND PULL OUT.

SOUND GOOD ...?

YES.

THAT'LL BE FINE.

SA-TOMI ...?

NOOO!!

THAT WAS A *MISTAKE!!*

I DON'T *LOSE* LIKE THAT... AND... AND...

...YOU D-DIDN'T NEED TO *SAVE* ME...

KAZU-YUKI... YOU...

YOU'RE ALWAYS LIKE THAT... FOR ME.

UM... ....

I... ...?

YOU PASSED OUT AND... ER...

WELL, UM--

KAZU-YUKI!!

YOU BETTER NOT HAVE--

HUH?

NO, NO, *NO!!* IT WASN'T *ME!*

I DID IT. MY APOLO-GIES.

Y-YOU ...?

OH...
....

LET'S GO.

COME ON, SATOMI.

BUT... I CAN'T LET IT END LIKE THIS.

CAN I...?

HEY!

COMMAN-DER! THE TARGET'S MOVING!

RELEASE SAFETIES! PREPARE TO FIRE!!

FIRE!!

BKAM

BKAM

WHRAM

WHRAM

WHAM

CEASE FIRE!!

WHROOM

HERE, MRS. SATO... I BROUGHT YOU SOME EGGPLANT FROM OUR GARDEN.

TOBACCO

OH, YOU'RE ALWAYS SO KIND.

I'LL PICKLE THEM AND GIVE YOU SOME--

WHOOM

THE SOLDIERS ARE REALLY AT IT TODAY... AREN'T THEY?

THEY SURE ARE.

BKOOM

BKOOM

BKOOM

TARGET TWO CLOSING RANGE ON TARGET ONE!

BAM

BAM

BAM

WHAT A PAIN.

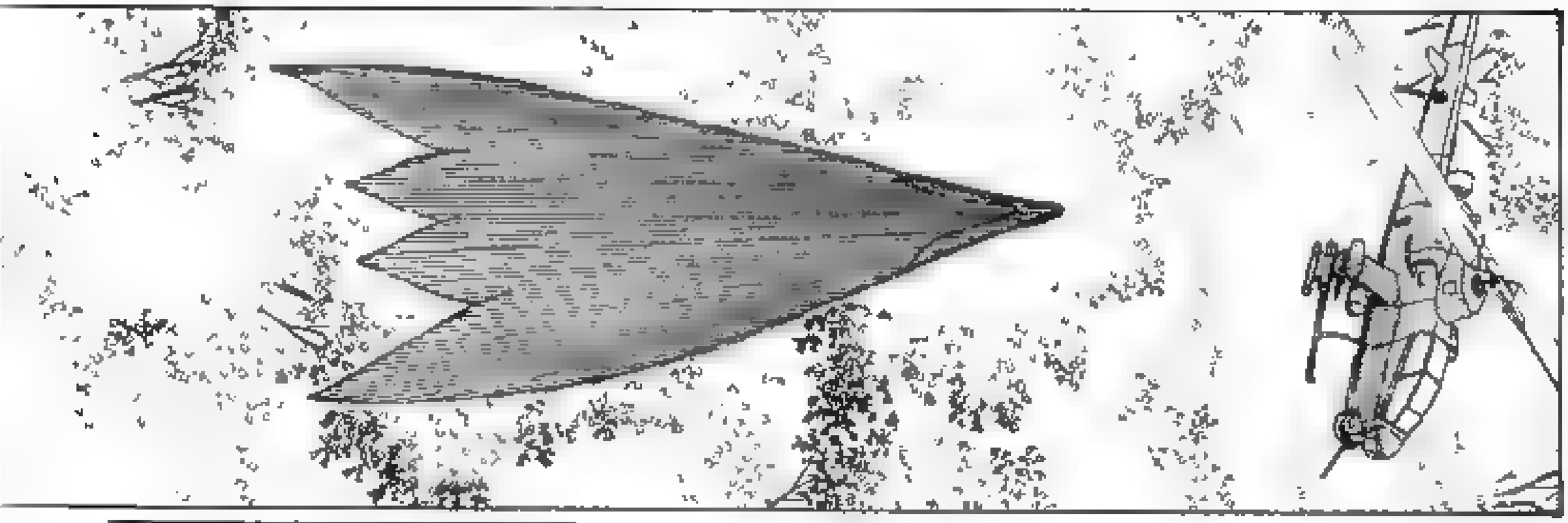
IT'S TOTALLY POINTLESS FOR SHADOW DRAGONS TO FIGHT EACH OTHER, ISN'T IT?

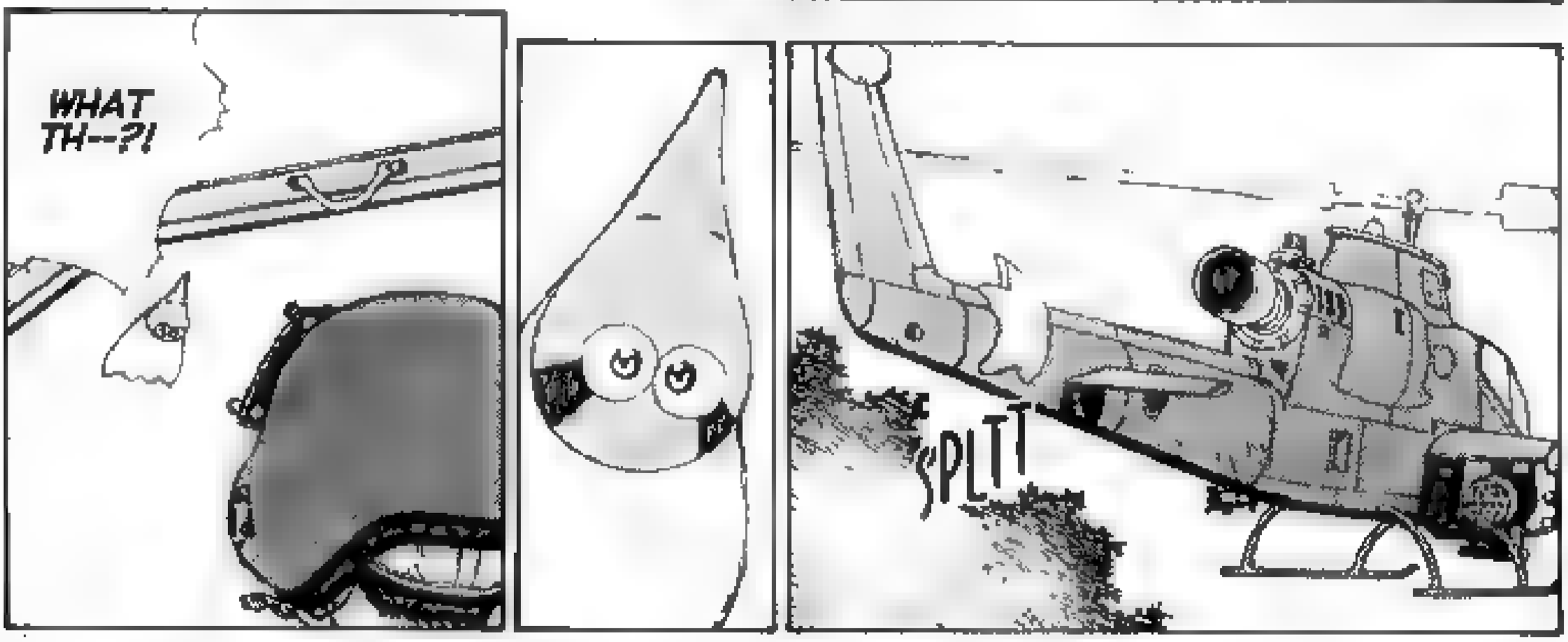
BAM

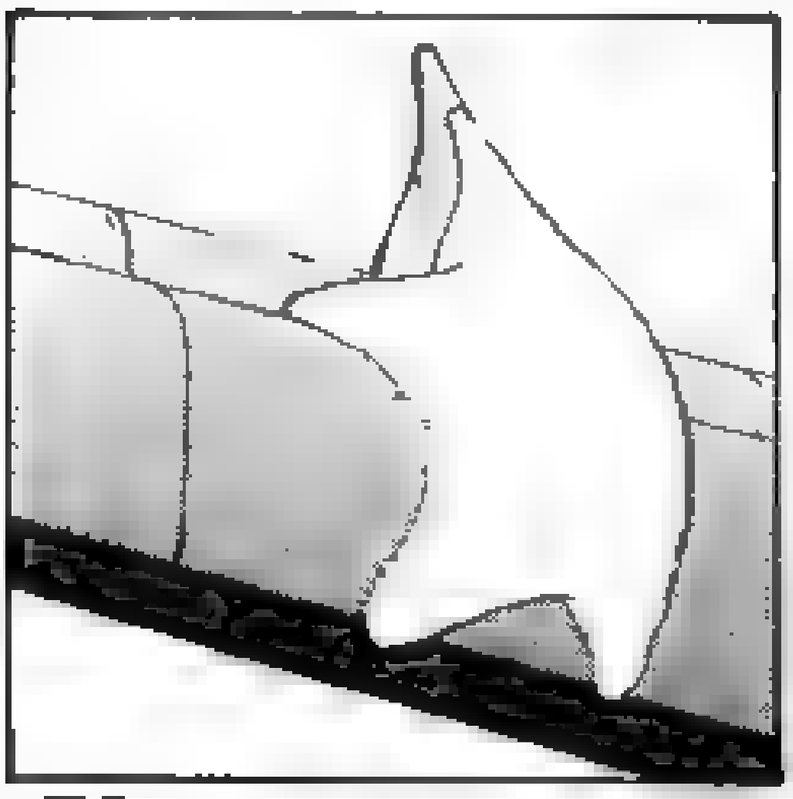
BAM

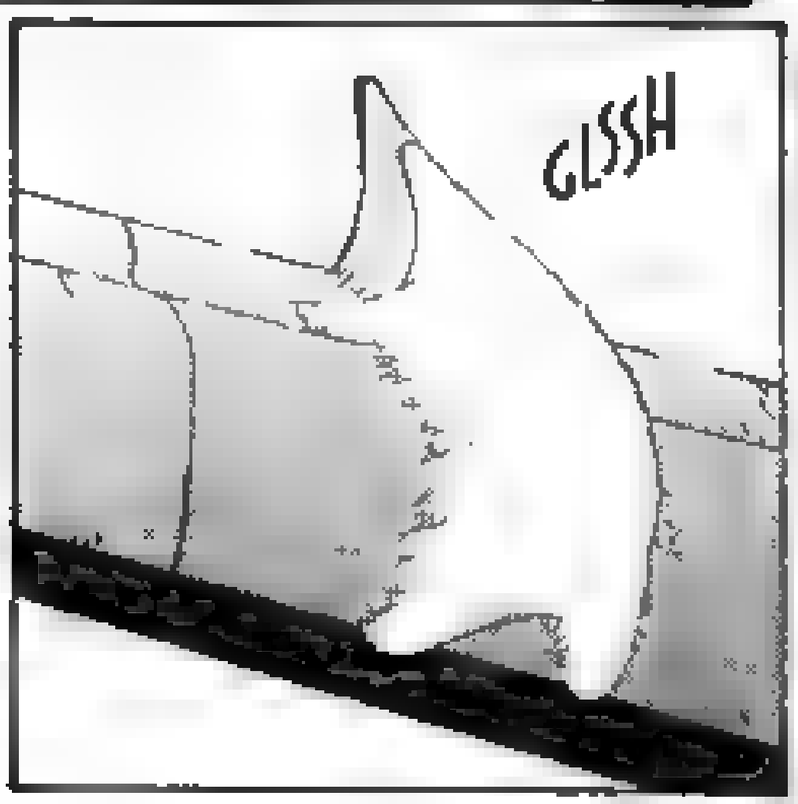
BAM

BAM




WHAT TH--?!
SPLTT




GLSSH

SKRAKK

AAHHH!!

KRAK

SKRSSH

FWAP

WHISSHH

WHRAKKK

SHKK

BKOOM BKOOM

FWHIT

B

WHI

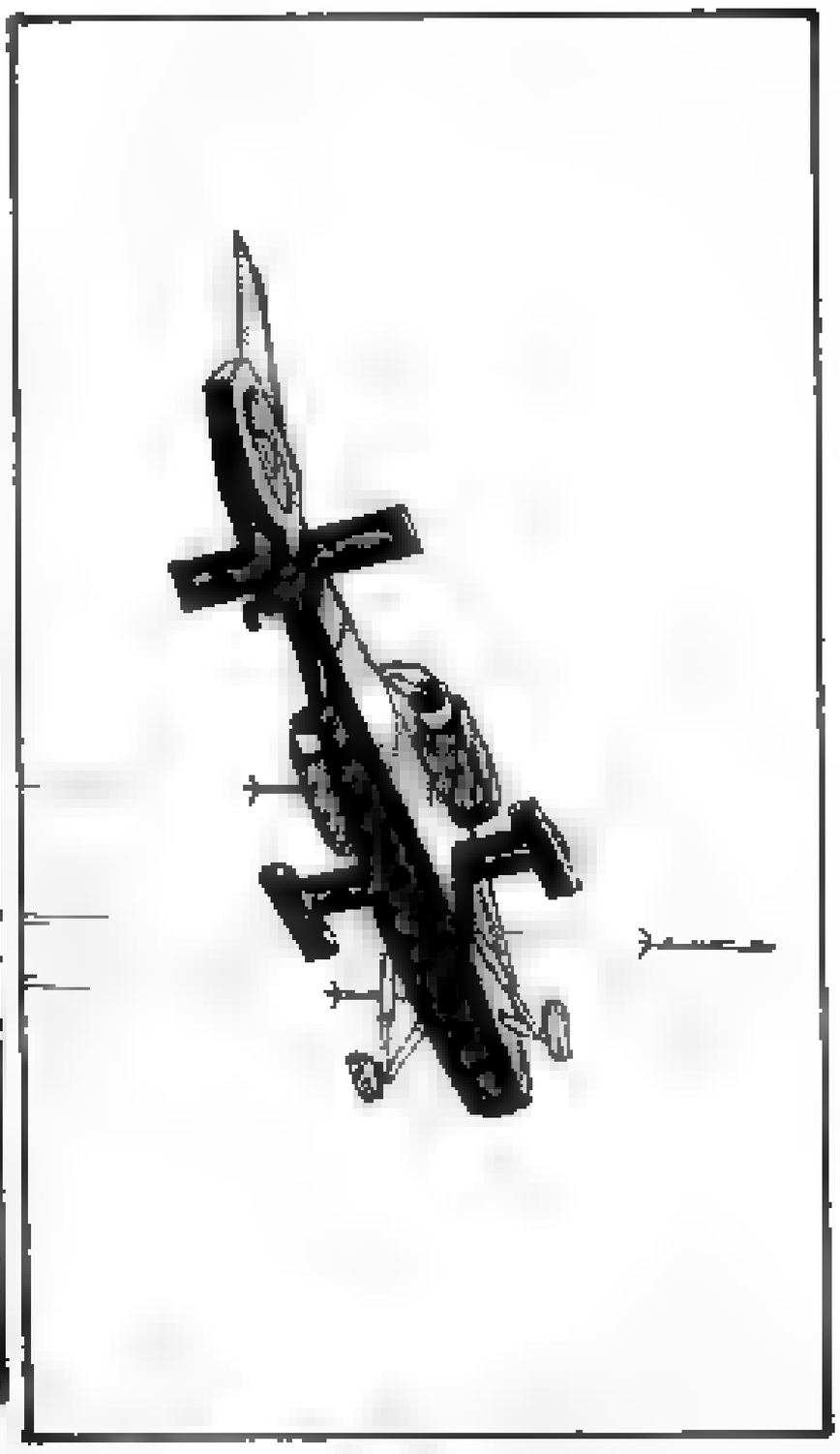
KOOM

SHAK

WE'VE BEEN SPOT-TED!

EVADE! NOW!!

WHUP
WHUP
WHUP



SK

AAHH!!

EEK!

!

SH... SHIINA ...?

WARLOCK FIVE HAS BEEN SHOT DOWN!

ALL AIR ASSETS DESTROYED!!

SHORT RANGE SAM DEPLOYMENT COMPLETE, SIR!

INFANTRY UNITS MAINTAIN FIRE ON TARGET ONE!

TARGET ACQUIRED!

FIRE!

FSSHHTT

FWH

OOSH

WH

KOOM

FHSSH

WHRAMM

WHOOSH

BIG ROOM

CHUKK

GLCCH

SLRCH

WHSSH

FWAP

TARGET TWO CLOSING!

BKOOM

BKOOM

ANTI-AIR ALERT!

WHAT THE HELL ARE THE AA UNITS DO—

CHUK

CHUK

AAGH!!

WHOOM

FALL BACK !!

WHOOSH

BKOOM

VRMBBB

HEAT ROUNDS ?!

IT HAS MULTIPLE WAR-HEADS ?!

WHAM

I DON'T GET IT.

DOESN'T THE *LINKER* FEEL ANY PAIN? THAT GIRL MUST BE CRAZY!

GIRLS HANDLE PAIN BETTER.

BUT I DOUBT IT'S THAT.

YOU LOOK LIKE THE TYPE THAT MAKES GIRLS CRY.

JESUS, NAOZUMI, YOU HAVE THE *WEIRDEST* SENSE OF HUMOR SOME-TIMES...

SHAAH

SHFF

PERHAPS YOU DID SOMETHING TO MAKE HER HATE YOU?

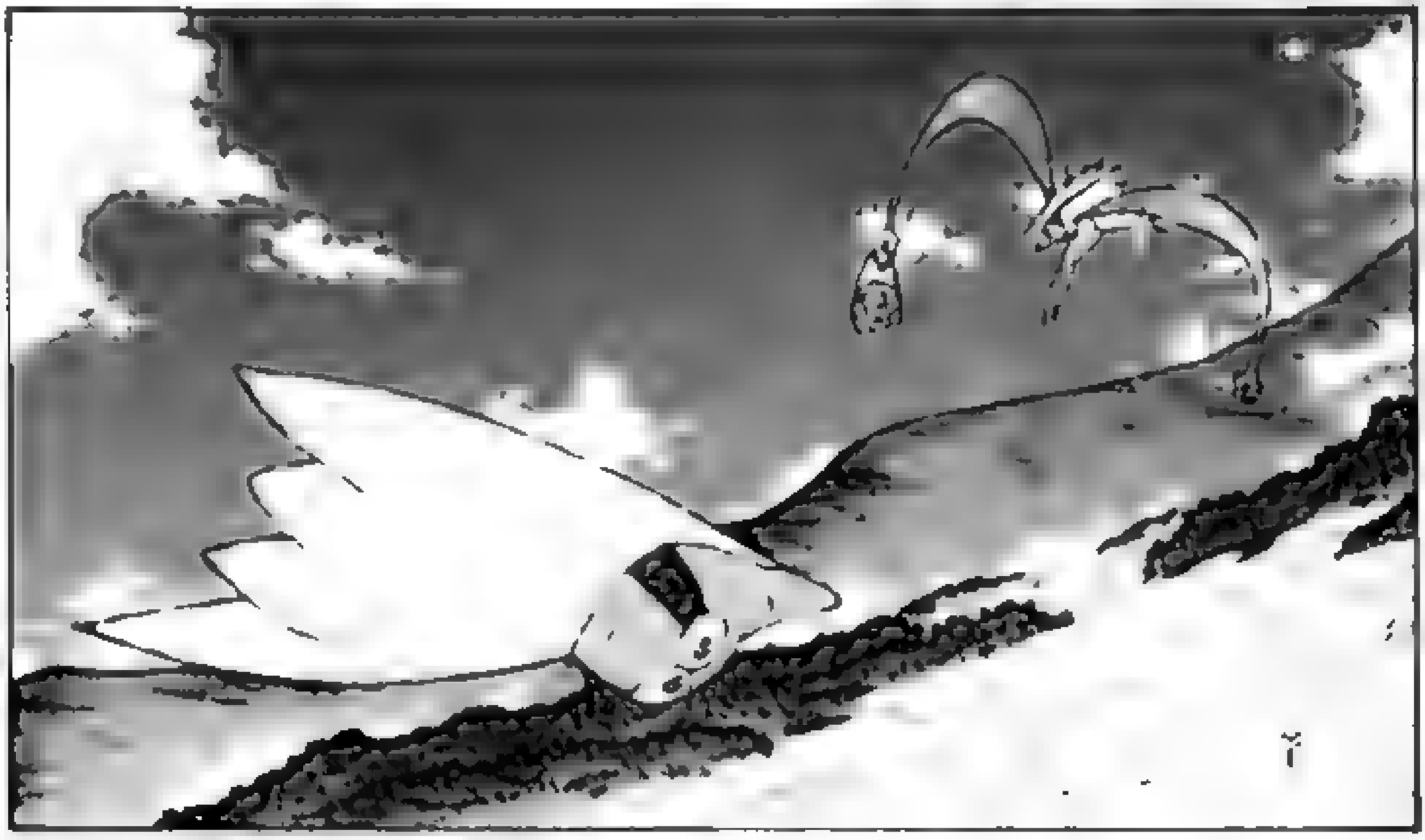
HUH? *ME?!*

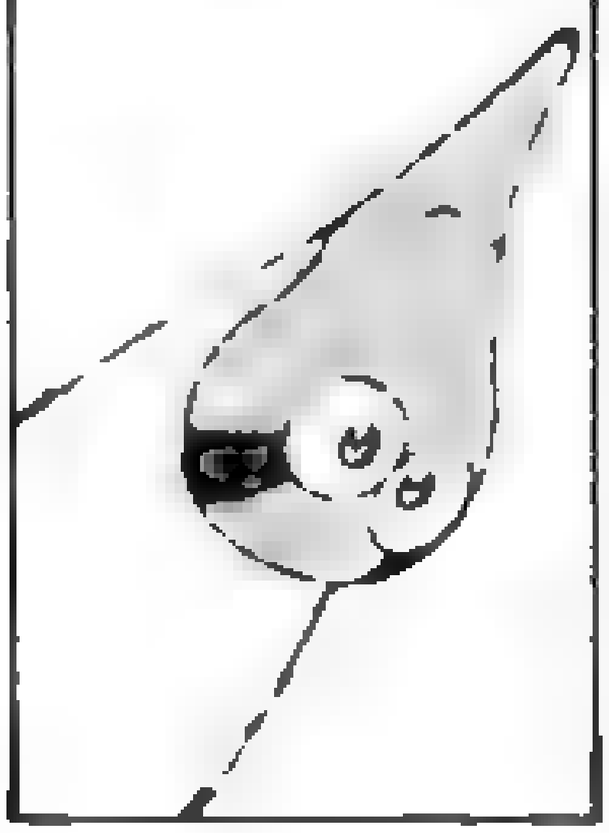
M-MY CAKE DON'T DIDN'T
VERY SICKNESS, THAT WAS A DOM DISCRETION
WON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOU, KAKUYUMI.

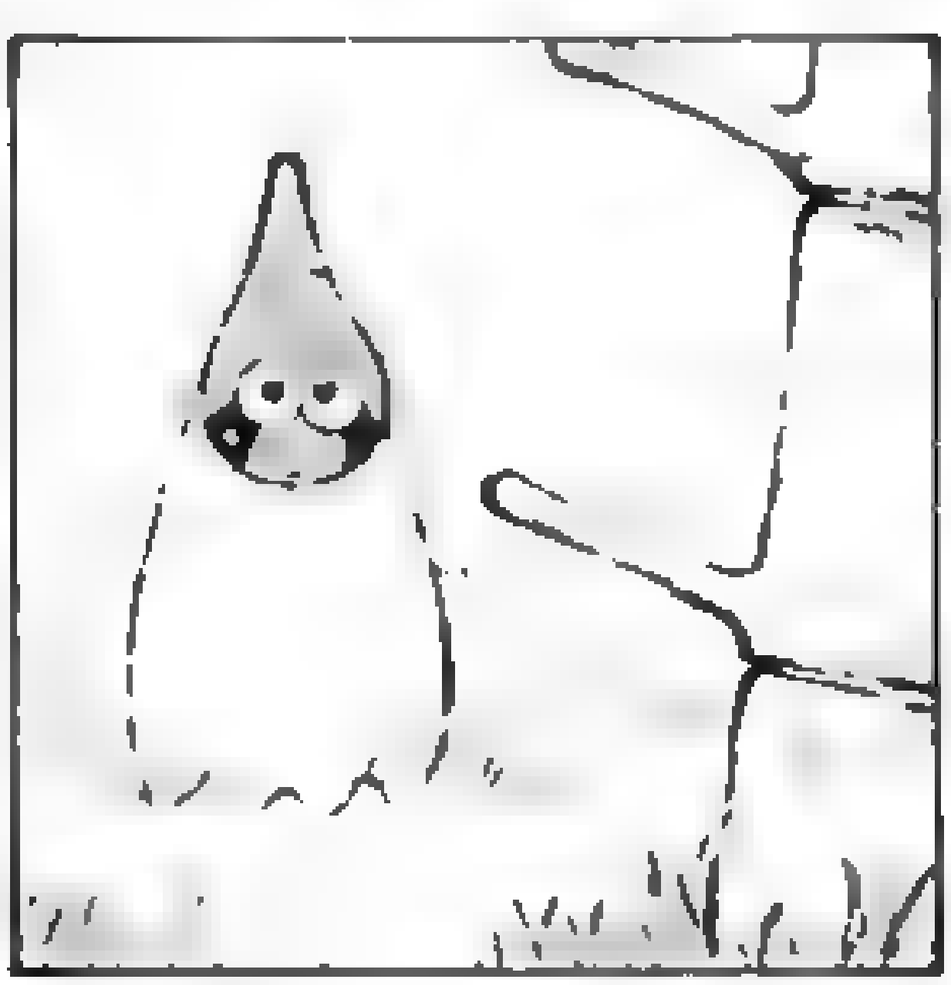
"OR
KAKUYUMI.

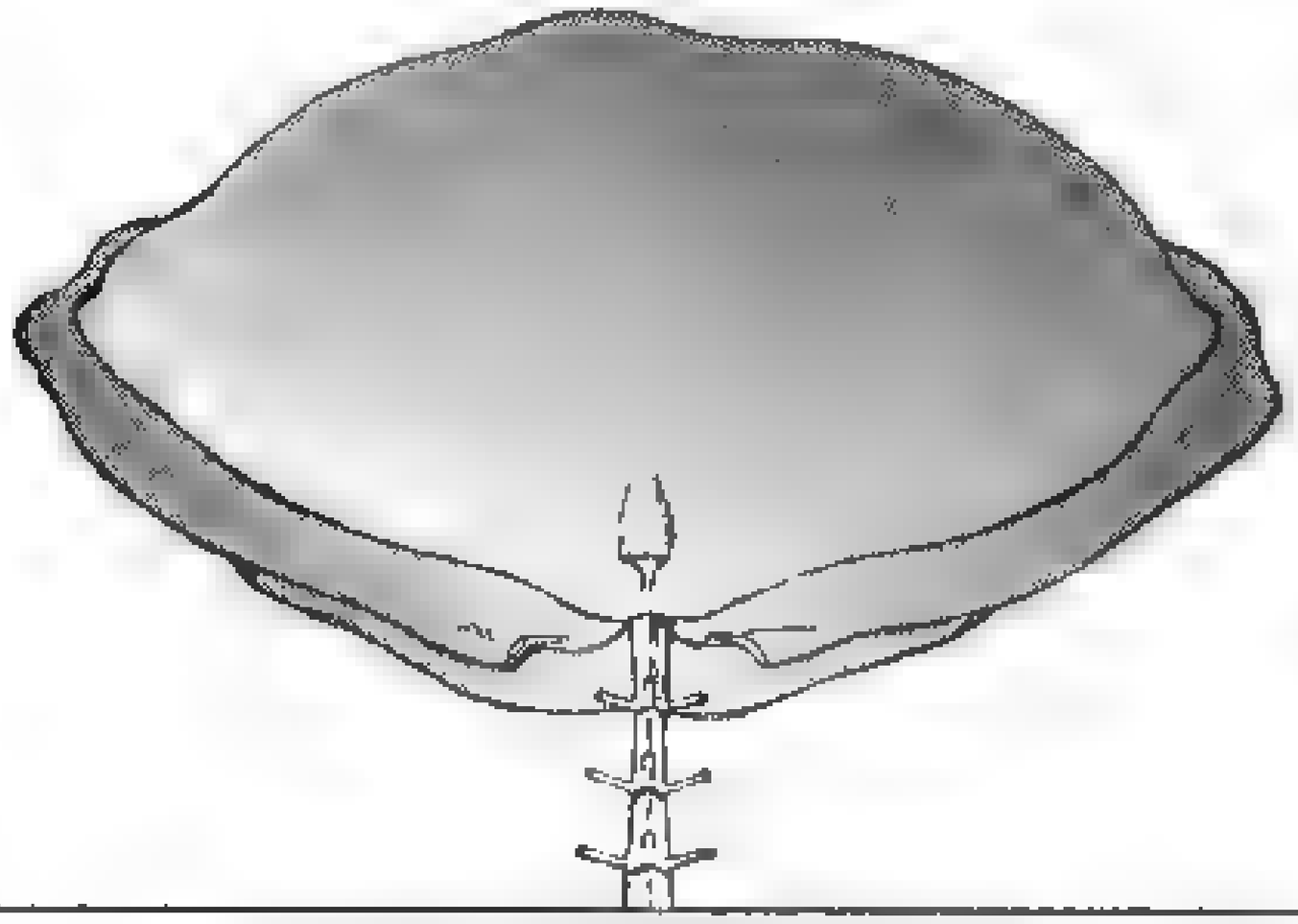
WHAT?

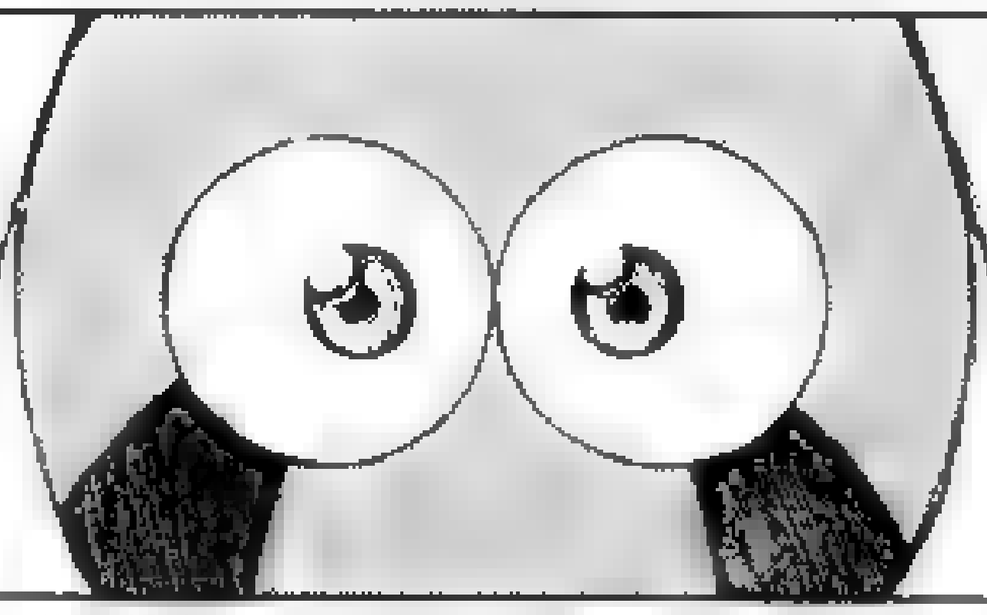
IT'S NOT ONE OF *THEM?*



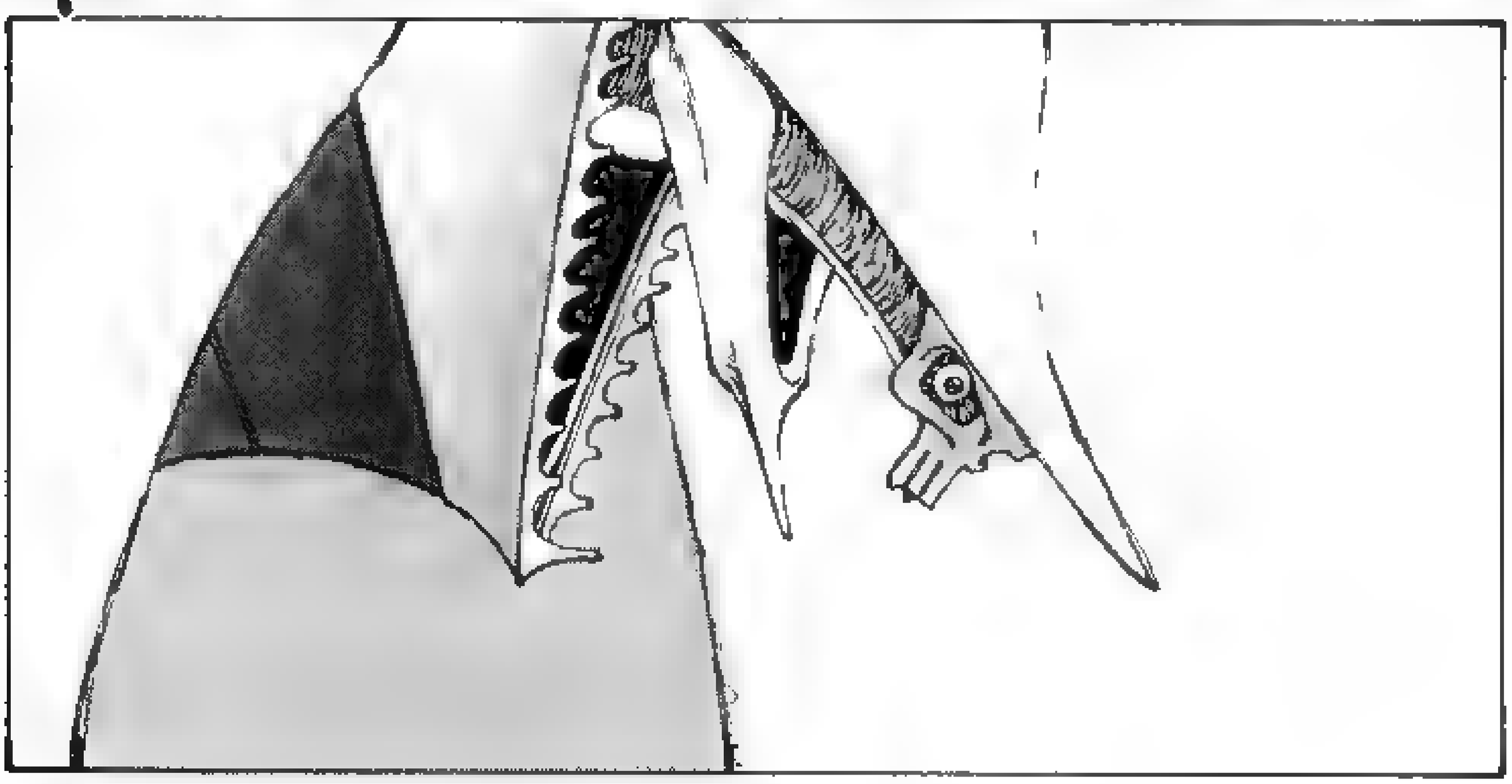








FWHOO
SHH



AH ...?

SMASH

YOU... YOU'RE...

WHEW... NORIO, THAT WAS *CLOSE.*

I DON'T EXACTLY *WANT* TO BE DOING THIS...

...YOU KNOW?

SH... SHIINA?

OH, SHIINA ...!

TRIAGE THE WOUNDED!

AKI-YAMA! SITREP TO HQ!

MY GUESS IS IT WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME TRYING TO DETAIN YOU PEOPLE.

YOU GUYS SURE HAVE ME IN A HELLUVA POSITION HERE. I CAN'T JUST--

NOT UNLESS YOU KILLED US. AND YOU MIGHT FIND THAT A *CHAL-LENGE.*

HOSHI-MARU!!

PYAK

HUH? WHAT IS IT?

...?

FWHTF

SHOP

HOSHI-MARU, WHAT'S GOING ON?!

NORIO! GET ME OUT OF HERE, FAST!

ﾌｧｻｰ

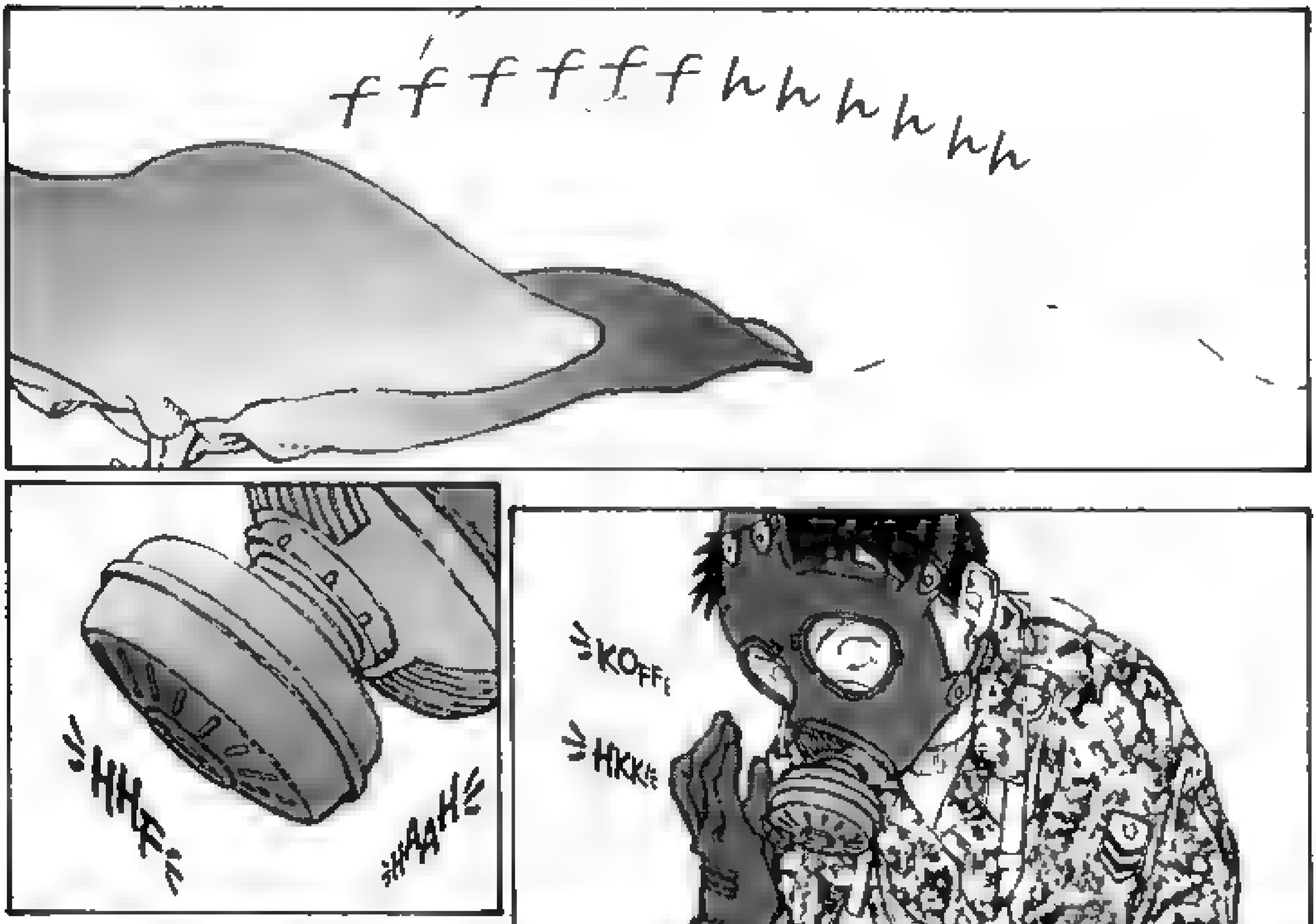
MOVE UPWIND FIRST.

HURRY ...!

WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING ...?

A SWEET...

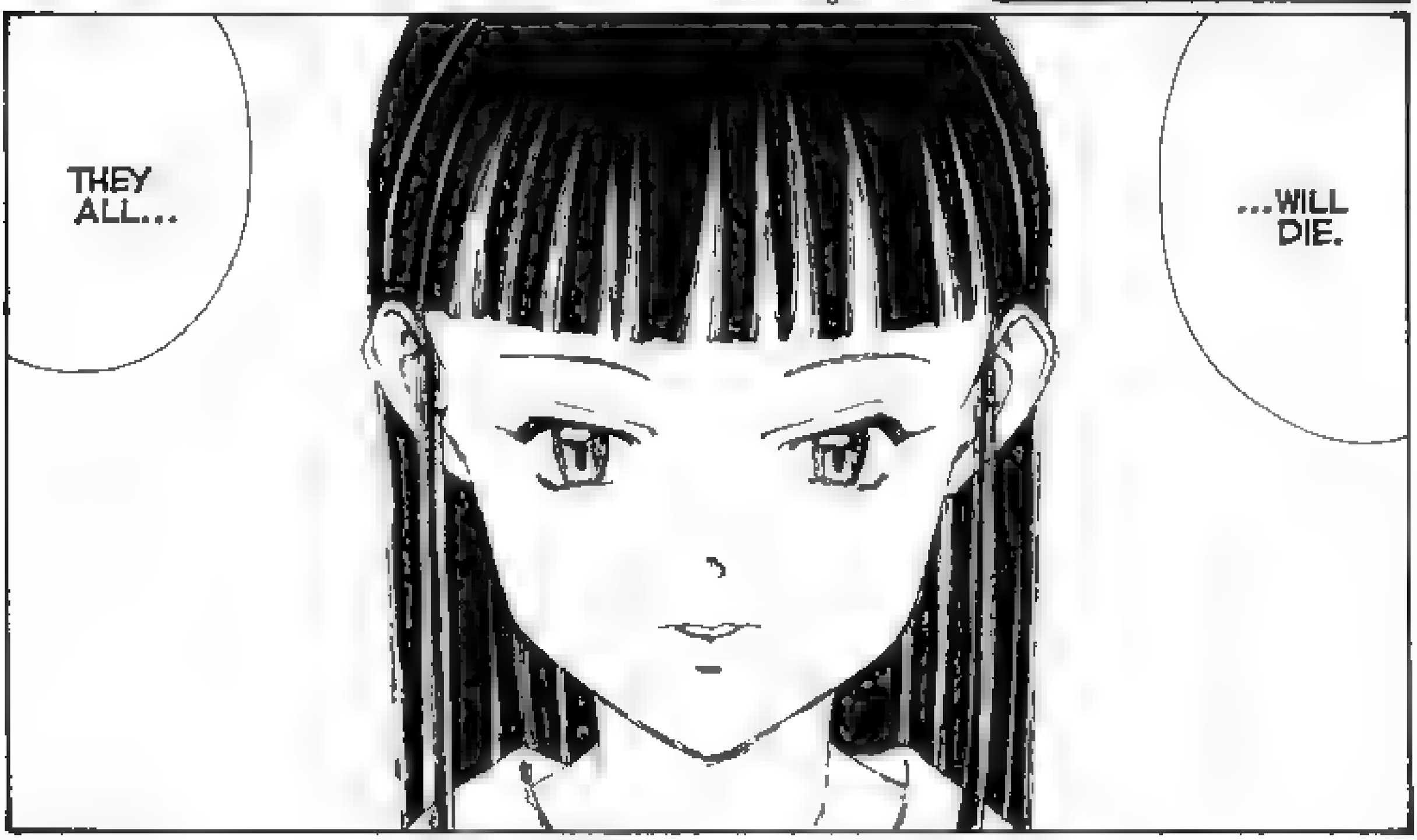
...SMELL?

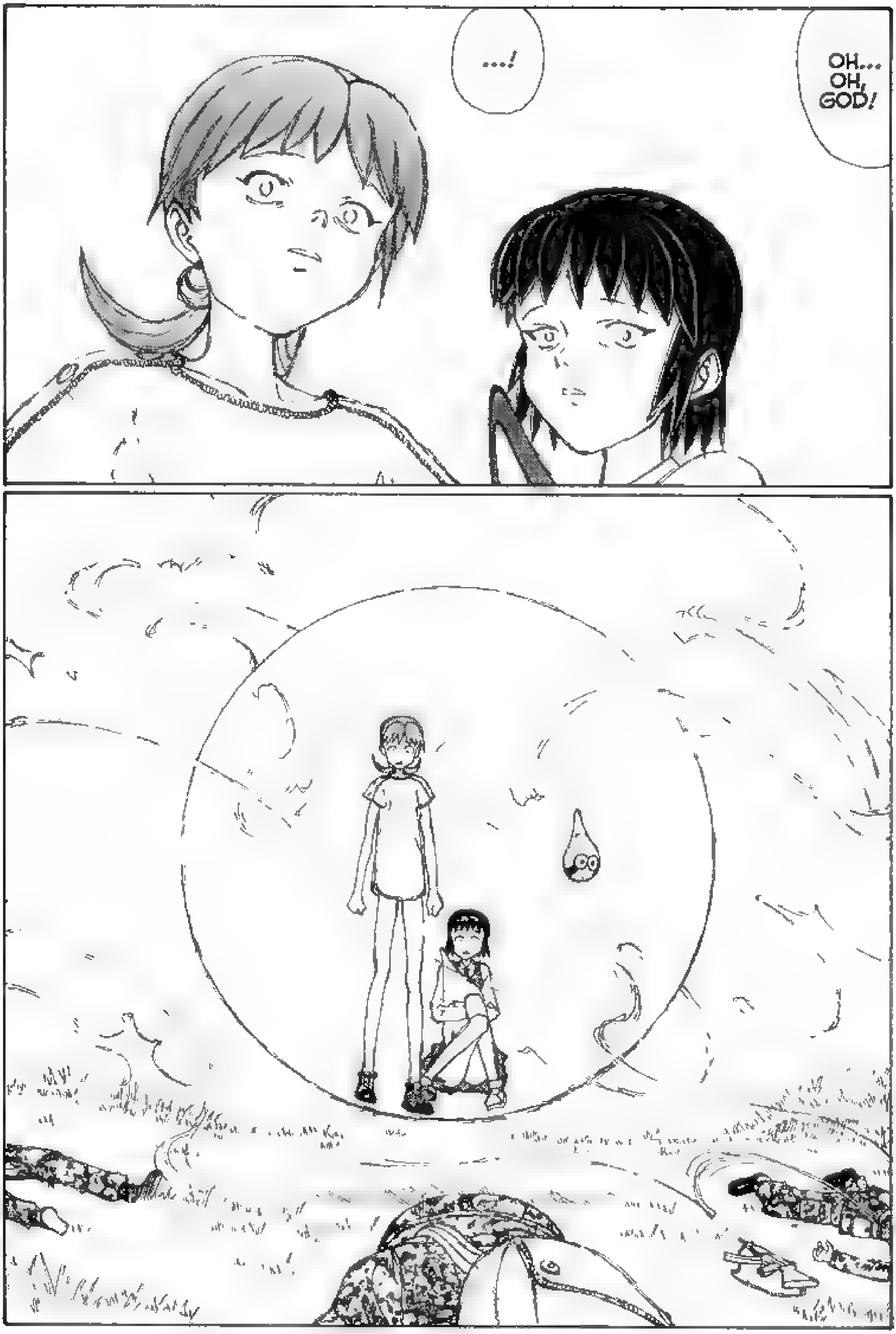

f f f f f f f hhhhhh
HHF
HHAAH
KOFF
HKK
FWHMPH

A GAS ATTACK?!

NO!!

*Nuclear-Biological-Chemical




...!
OH... OH, GOD!

THE ONLY THING SHADOW DRAGONS CAN'T HANDLE...
...IS *LIFE.*
IS IT NOT?

MAN, THIS IS *HARSH.* THESE GUYS ARE *SERIOUS.*

WHAT...
.....

I...I DON'T...

H...

HOSHI-MARU ...?

THOSE PEOPLE...

WHAT HAPPEN-ED TO THEM?

TELL ME!

PLEASE, HOSHI-MARU ...?

TELL THE RESERVE TROOPS TO FORM RESCUE TEAMS!

IS THAT N-B-C UNIT ON THE SCENE YET?!

DO WE HAVE WORD FROM ANY OF THE GROUND UNITS?!

YUM

SI

WEATHER FLIGHT HAS DOWNLOADED DOPPLER ANALYSIS OF WIND DIRECTIONS IN THE BATTLE ZONE, COMMANDER!

DAMN IT!

IT'S GOING TO BE CARRIED INTO THE TOWN...

ISSUE AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION ADVISORY FOR ALL NEARBY COMMUNITIES... NO, MAKE IT AN *ORDER!*

TELL THEM WE'VE HAD A *PROPANE GAS* LEAK!

THE *N-B-C* UNIT HAS A TENTATIVE ON THE GAS, SIR.

WHAT IS IT?

IT'S CHARAC-TERISTIC OF AC, SIR.

HYDRO-GEN CYANIDE ...?

BUT... OUR MASKS SHOULD FILTER *ALL* ORGAN-ICS...

...?

HELLO, FUJI CITY DISASTER PREVEN-TION.

HUH?

UH, I DON'T KNOW. I'LL GET THE INDIVIDUAL IN CHARGE. HOLD PLEASE.

NO, DON'T PUT ME ON HOLD! *HELLO ..?!*

HEY, WHERE'S TANAKA? IT'S THE ARMY BASE.

I THINK HE WENT TO BUY SOME SMOKES.

FWUMP

BUTTON UP THE ARMOR AND SEND IT IN!

I WANT THEM TO HIT THE TARGET WITH EVERY-THING THEY'VE GOT!

GENERAL HODA ON THE PHONE, SIR.

THE JASDF IS SCRAMBLING A FLIGHT OF WARTHOGS.

SEND A MONSTER TO STOP A MONSTER, EH...?

HMM ...?

WHAT?

UH... NEVER MIND.

SKIP

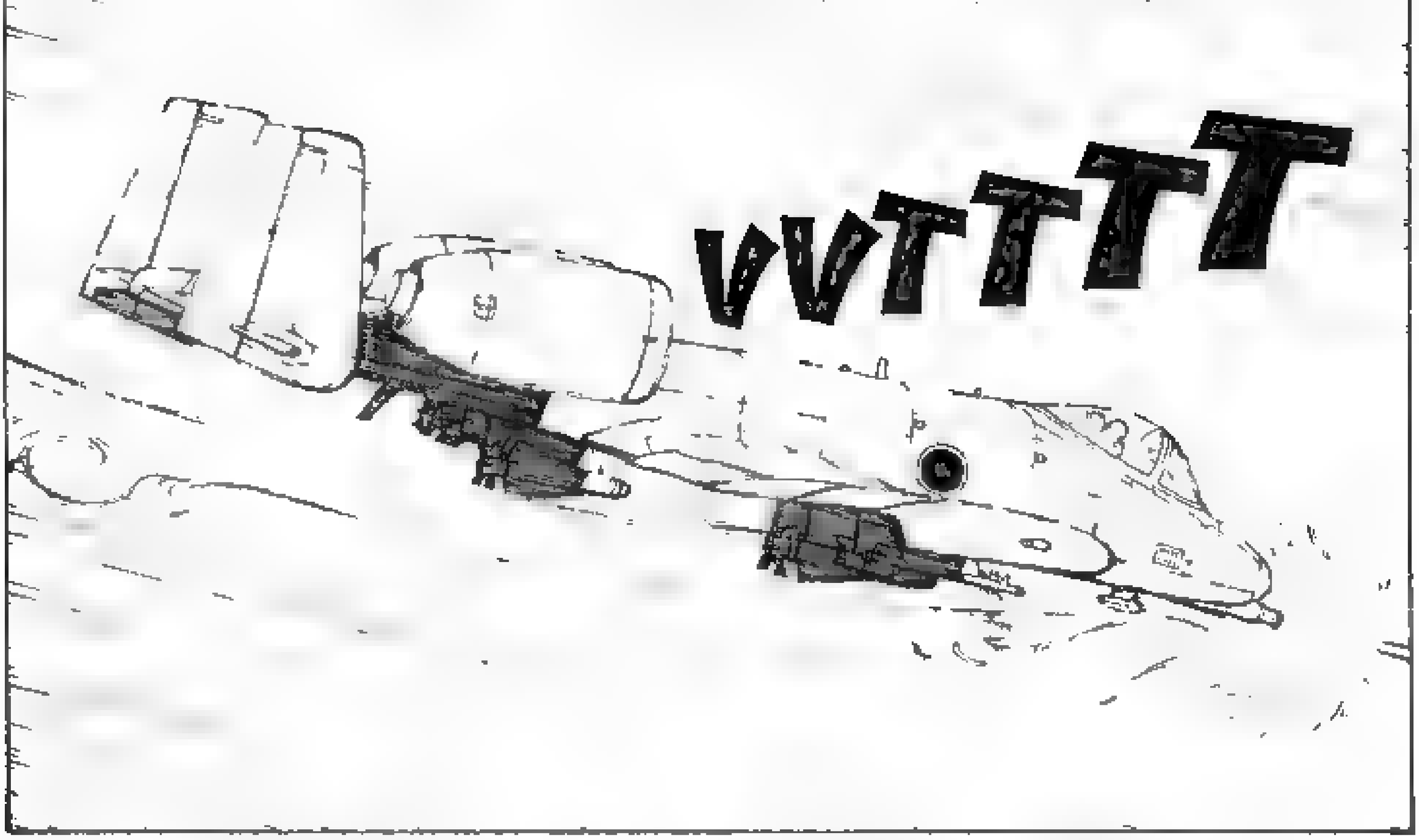
TARGET-ING DATA CON-FIRMED.

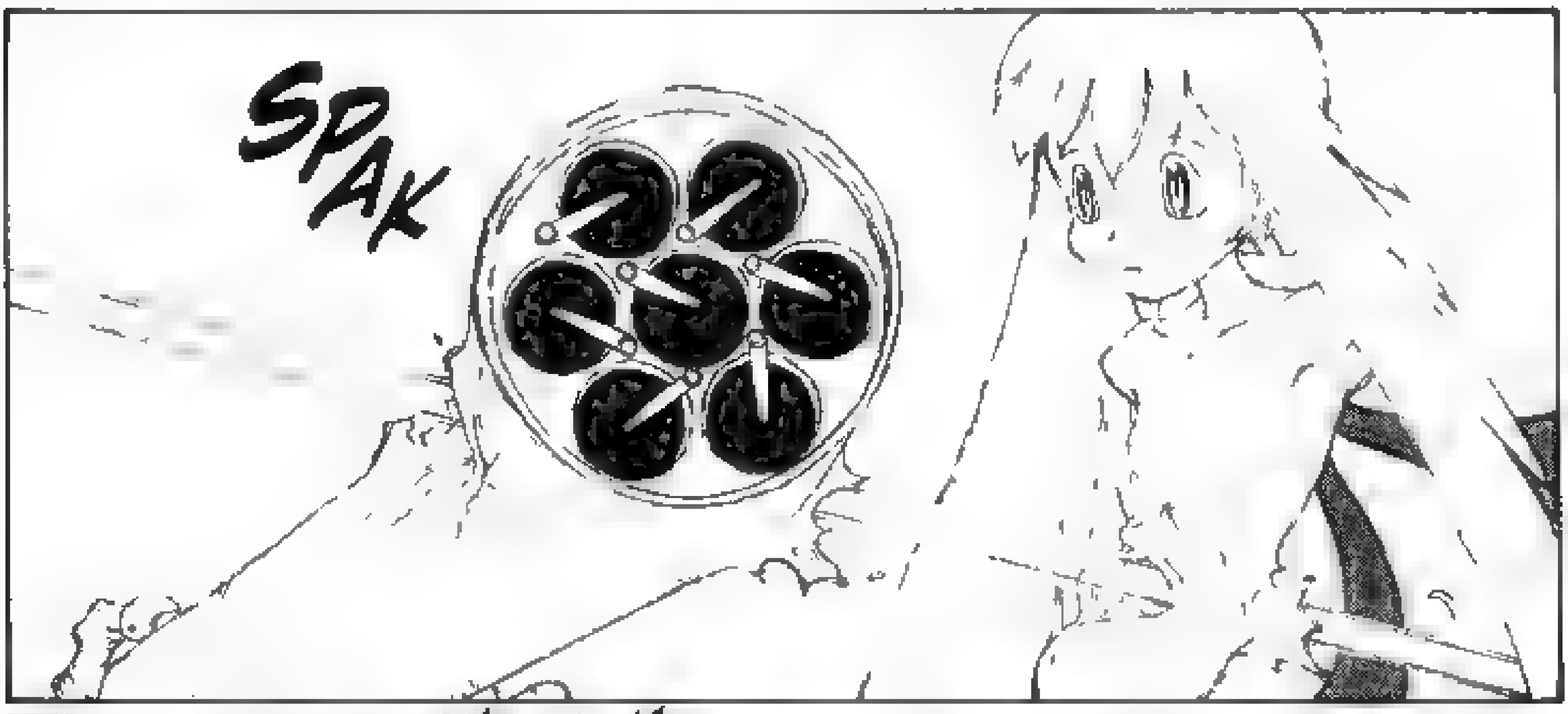
THERE MAY STILL BE GAS IN THE AREA.

BETTER FINISH THEM OFF QUICK.

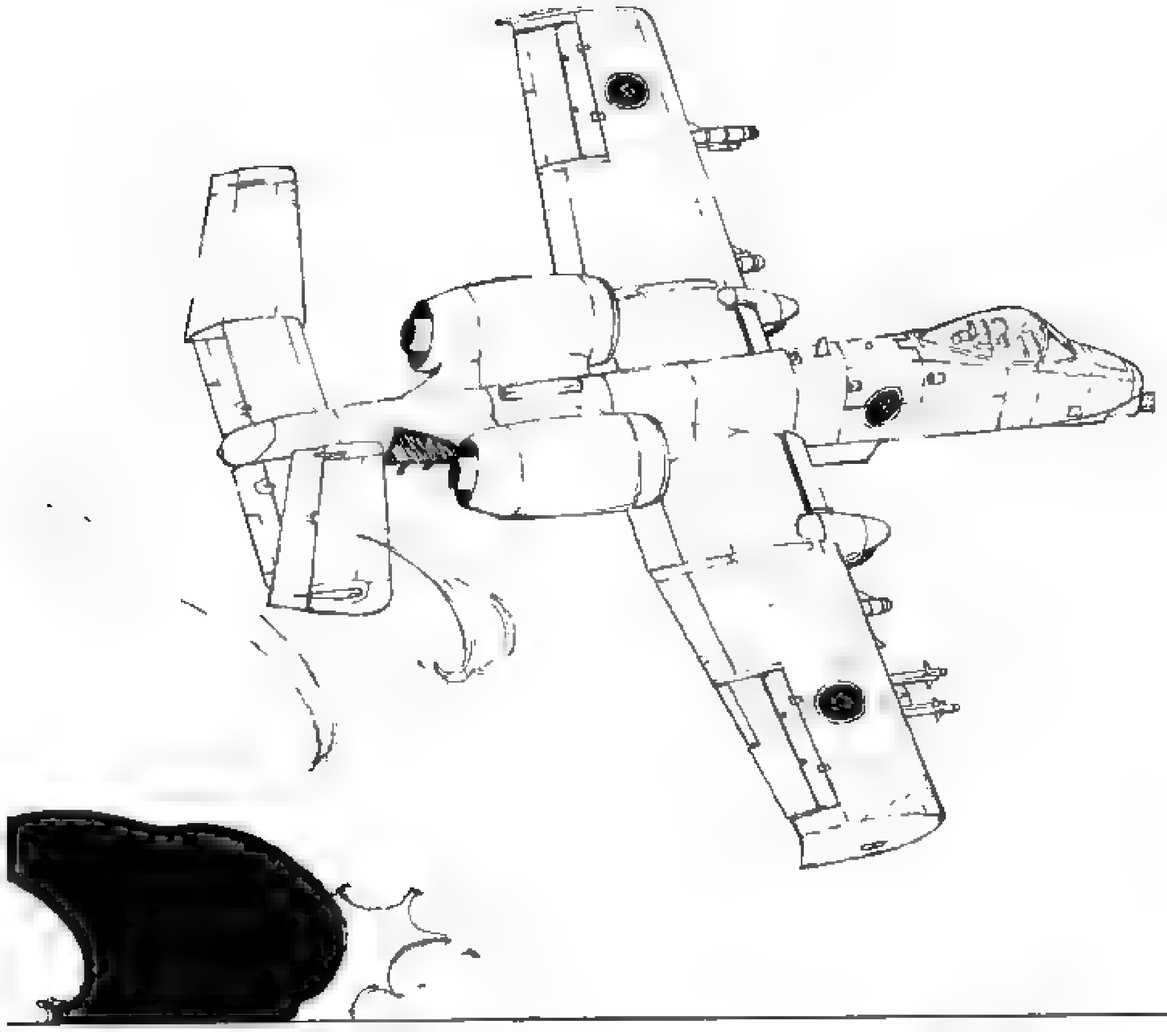
GIVE THEM EACH A TWO-SECOND BURST.

DON'T MISS.


WTTTT


SPAK

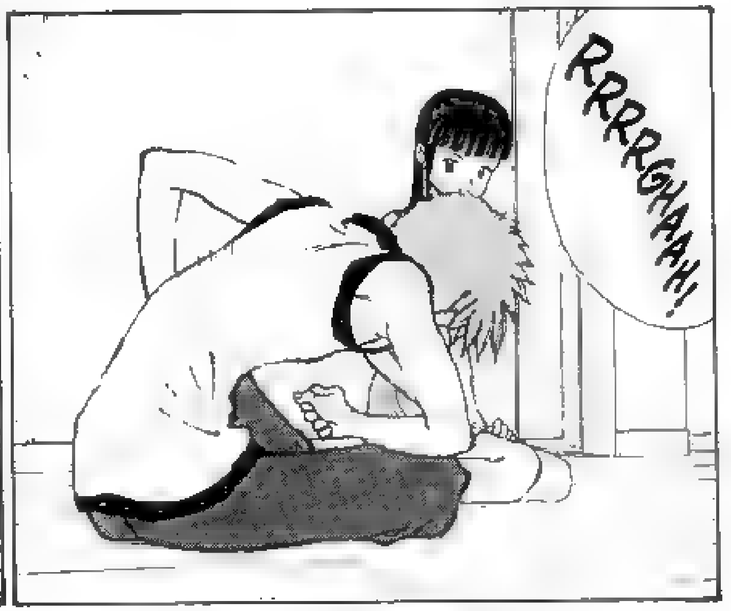
!!
KOOM



ORION ONE, DIS-ENGAGE.
ORION TWO, ENGAGE TARGET ONE WITH MAVERICK.

KANG
FWHDO

NNGK ...!


RRRRGHAAH!

W...WOW. A DIRECT HIT WITH A 30MM CANNON IS... REALLY *SOME-THING.*

SATOMI, THEY'RE COMING FOR YOU NEXT.

AN EYE FOR AN EYE...

YEAH.

I'VE JUST "LEARNED" THIS ONE AND HAVEN'T TEST FIRED IT, BUT... SHOULD BE OKAY.

SLCCH

KCHAK

LET'S SEE... THE GAU-8/A *AVENGER* SEVEN-BARRELED GATLING GUN...

FIRES A 4:1 MIX OF 30MM *HE* AND *DU* ROUNDS AT 3900/ MINUTE...

HE: High Explosive **DU:** Depleted Uranium

FSSH

UHHG!

AAH...
NNG...

WHEEE

HIT ON TARGET ONE, *RED SHIELD.*

ORION TWO DISEN-GAGING.

ORION THREE, GIVE TARGET ONE A TWO-SECOND BURST WITH YOUR *AVENGER.*

ROGER, *RED SHIELD.*

SHREEEE

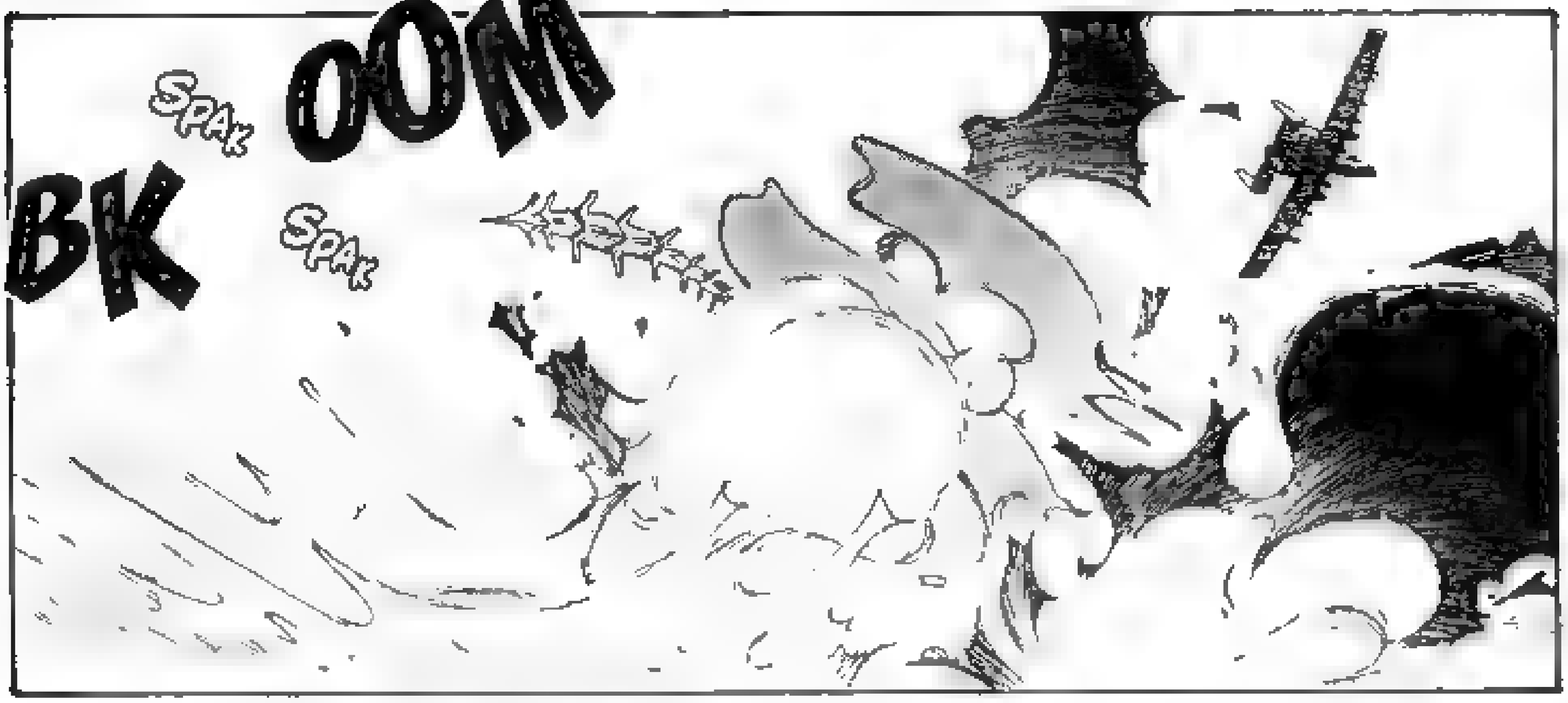
SPAK

SPAK

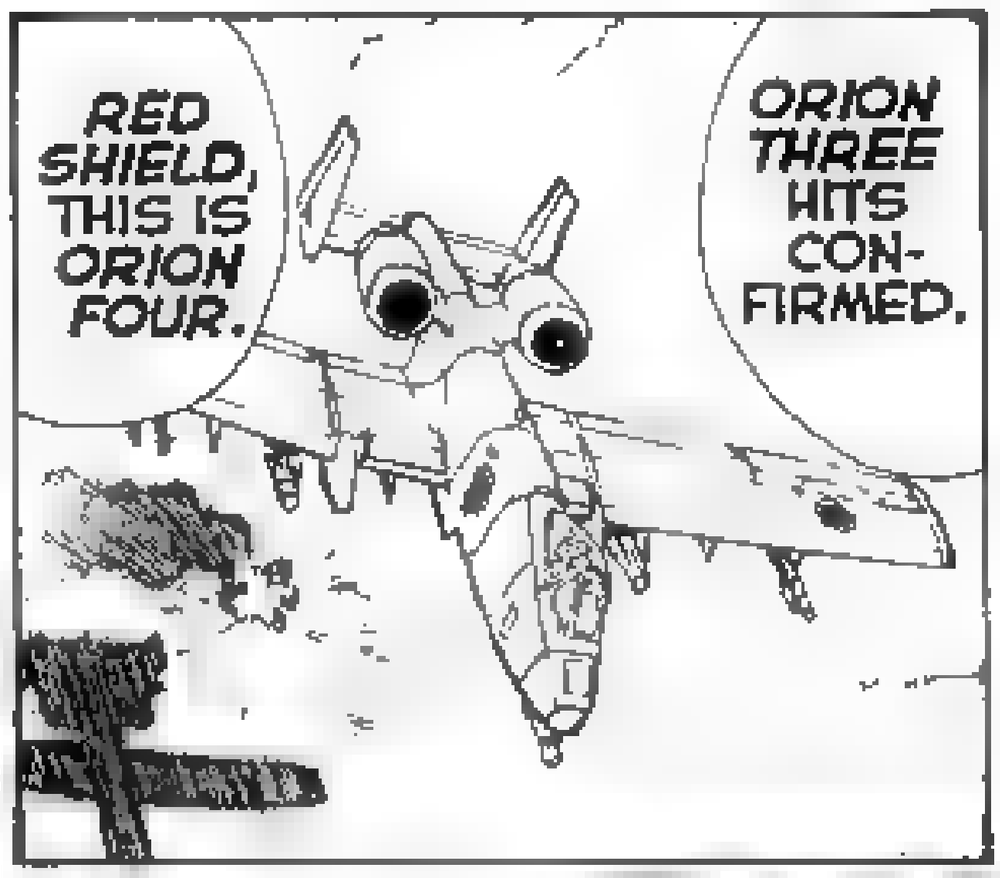
SPAK

AAH!!

FWHT


SPAK
OOM
BK
SPAK

NNK!


RED SHIELD, THIS IS ORION FOUR.
ORION THREE HITS CON-FIRMED.

ORION ONE ENTERING SECOND ATTACK RUN...

SHREEEE

WHAT THE--?

LOOKED LIKE... *KIDS?!*

AH?!

SPAK SPAK SPAK

OM

VVVTT

SPAK SPAK

NO...

SKRASHOOM

OH, NO...

NO...!

RED SHIELD! ORION THREE AND FOUR HAVE BEEN SHOT DOWN!!

SON OF A BITCH !!

SHREEE

DON'T YOU HAVE TO HUSTLE BACK TO WORK, DEAR...?

HA, HA... NAW, NO PANIC.

NOTHING EVER HAPPENS AROUND HERE.

DOES IT?

CO

I GOTTA SAY, THOUGH...

...THEY SURE ARE GOING AT IT *BIG TIME.*

BKOOM

WHRAM

WHRAM

THEY DID NOTIFY US THEY'D BE DOING LIVE FIRE TODAY, BUT...

WHITE

WHSSHH

SPAKOOM

SPAKOOM

HOLY --?!

WHAT TH--

:KOFF:

I... CAN'T... BREATHE ....

HUH... HARDER TO GET HITS AT LONG RANGE THAN I THOUGHT.

BETTER MOVE IN.

AH ...?!

NO!!

DON'T DO IT!!

NO! PLEASE ...!!

STOPP!!

WWWTT-

SPAK

SPAK

BOMP!!

WHOOM

N-NO...
....!

NOOO!!

SHREEEE

AAH ...

SNFF

DON'T CLOSE YOUR EYES...

...SHIINA.

IT IS YOUR *ROLE*...

...IN THIS DRAMA.

TO WATCH...

...AND...

...TO NEVER FORGET.

VROOM

HFF

HAHH

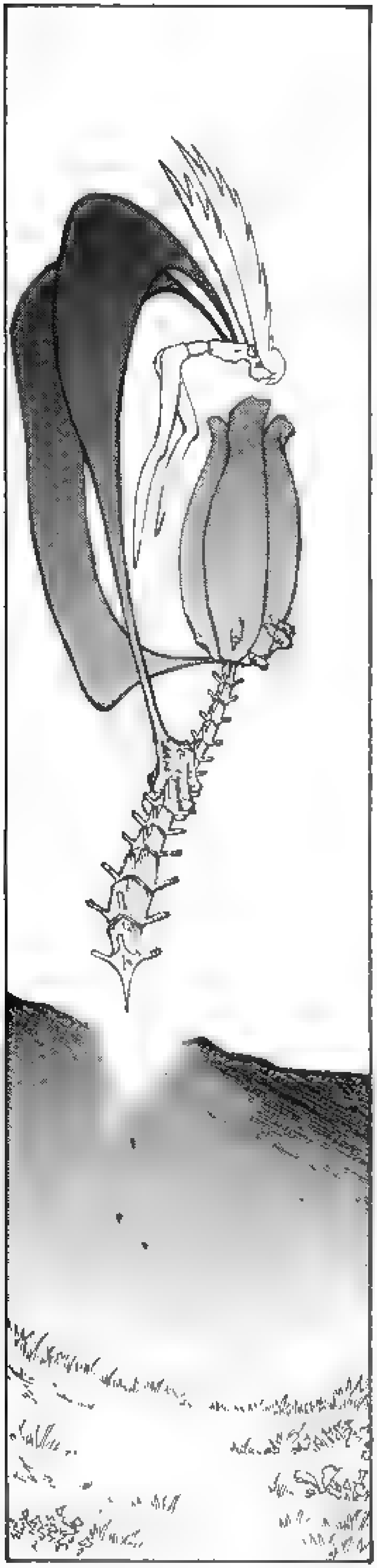
SATOMI ...?

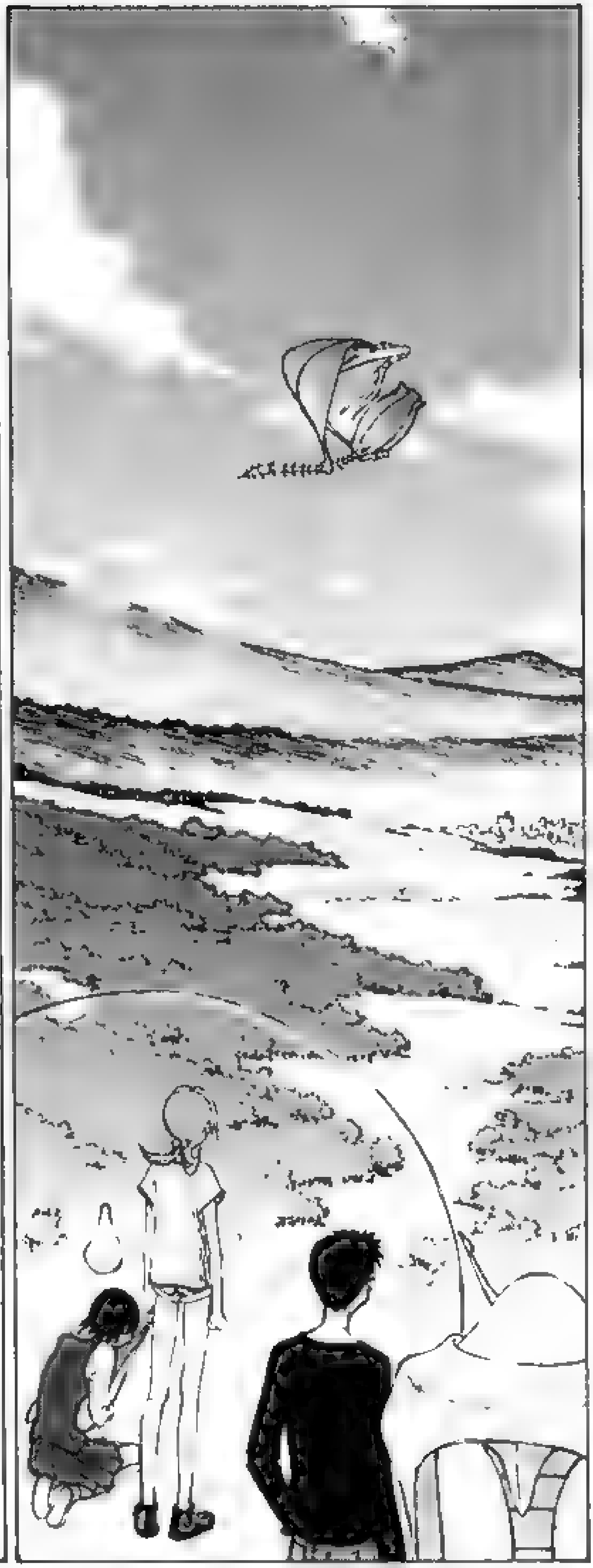
THAT'S ENOUGH... YOU THINK?

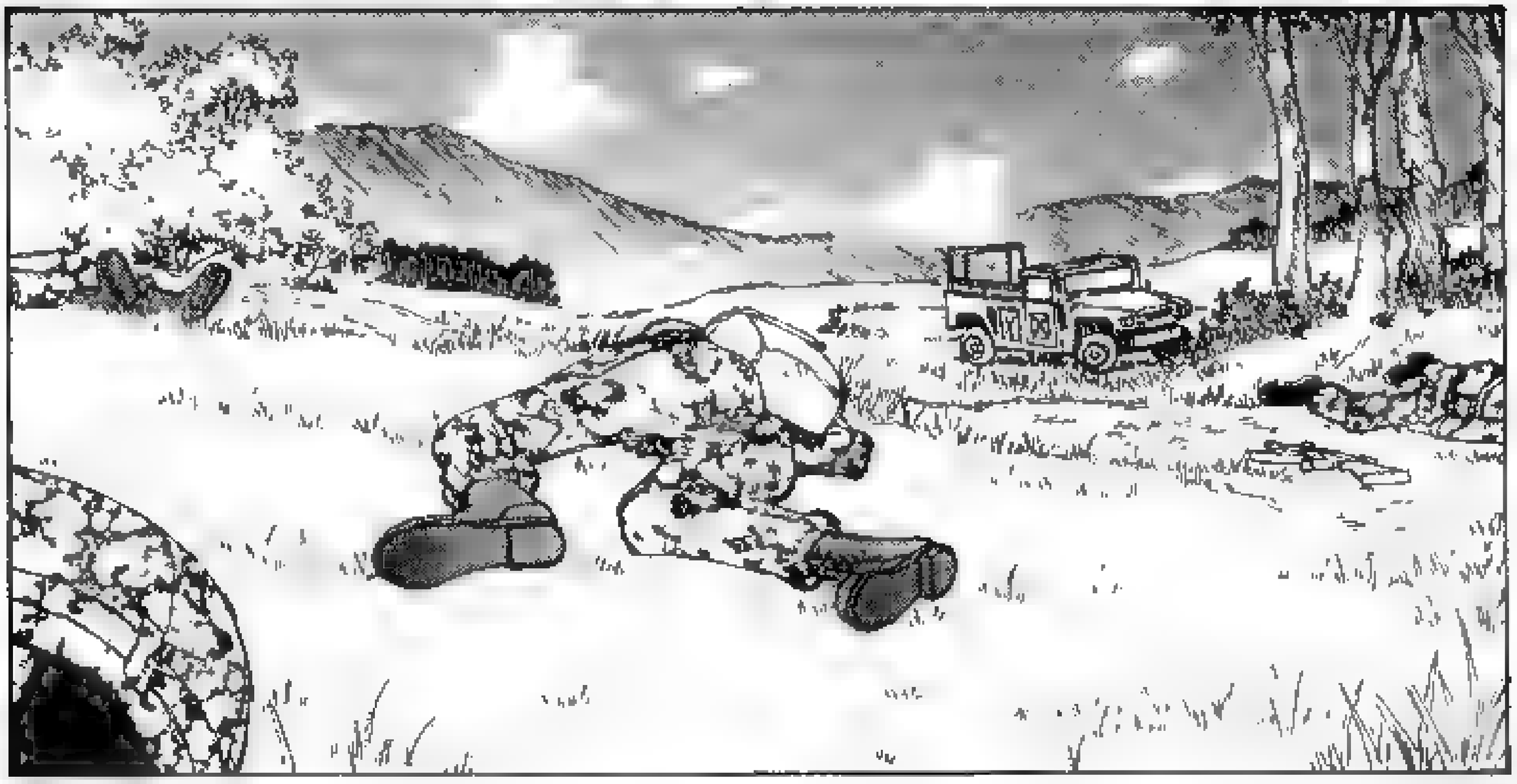
I THINK YOU'VE...

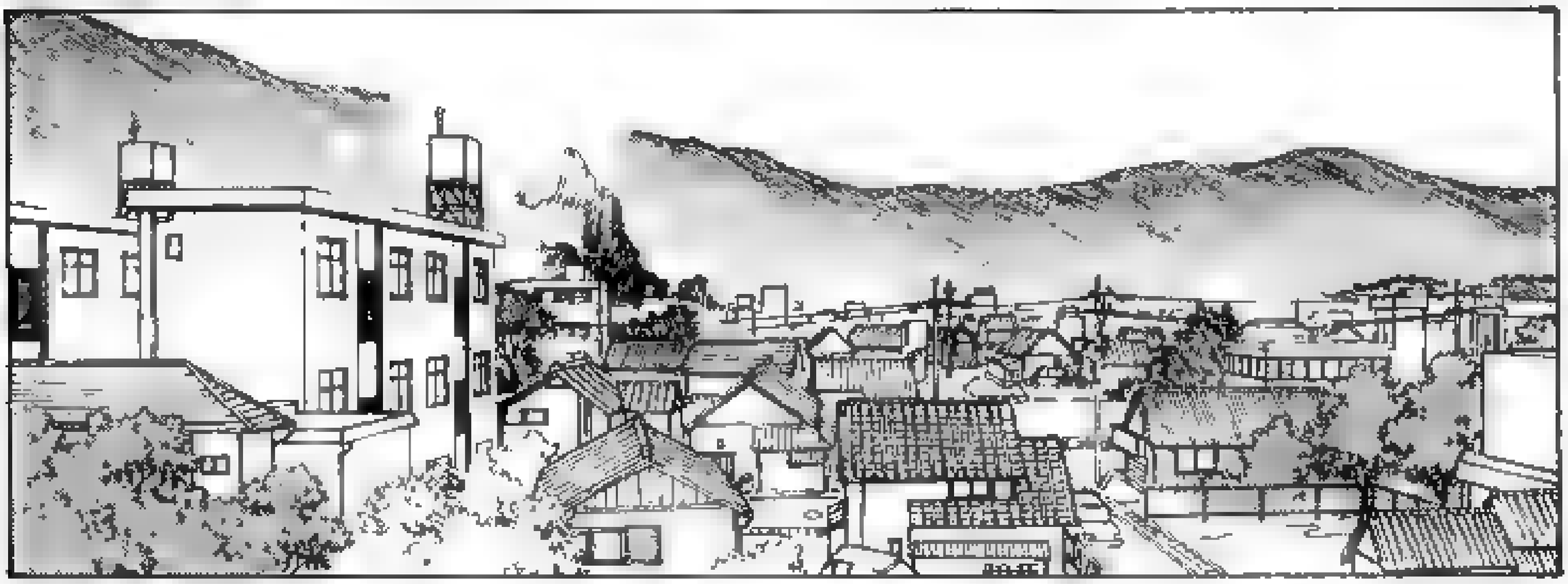
...UM...

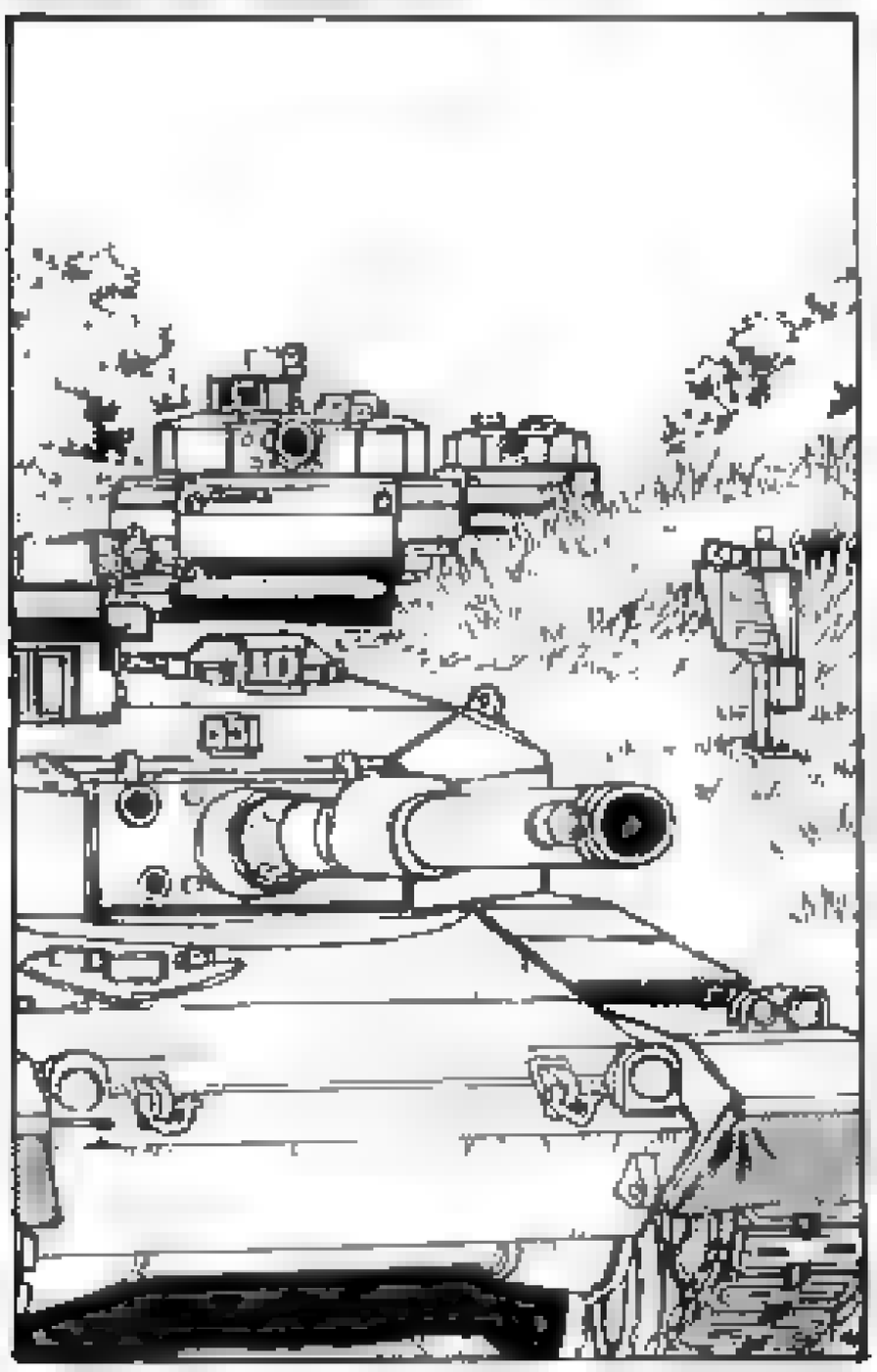
...YOU'VE KILLED *ENOUGH.*



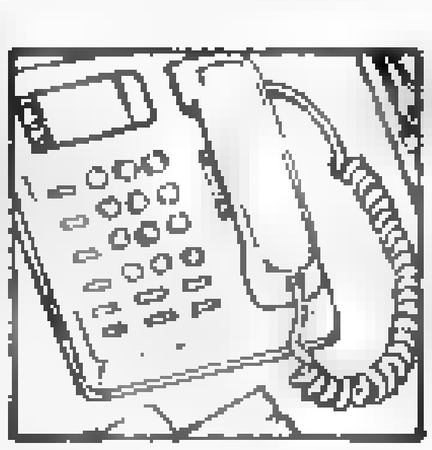


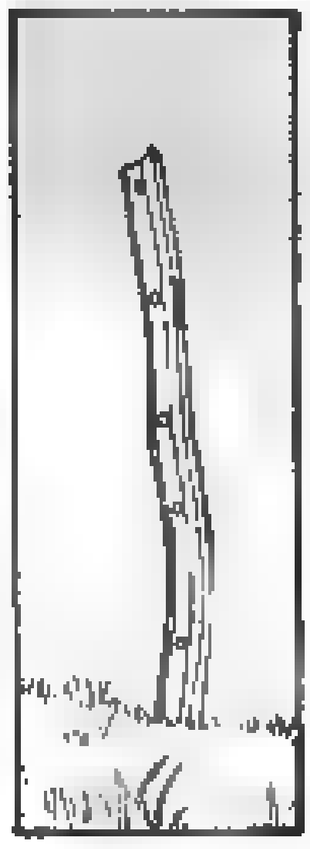


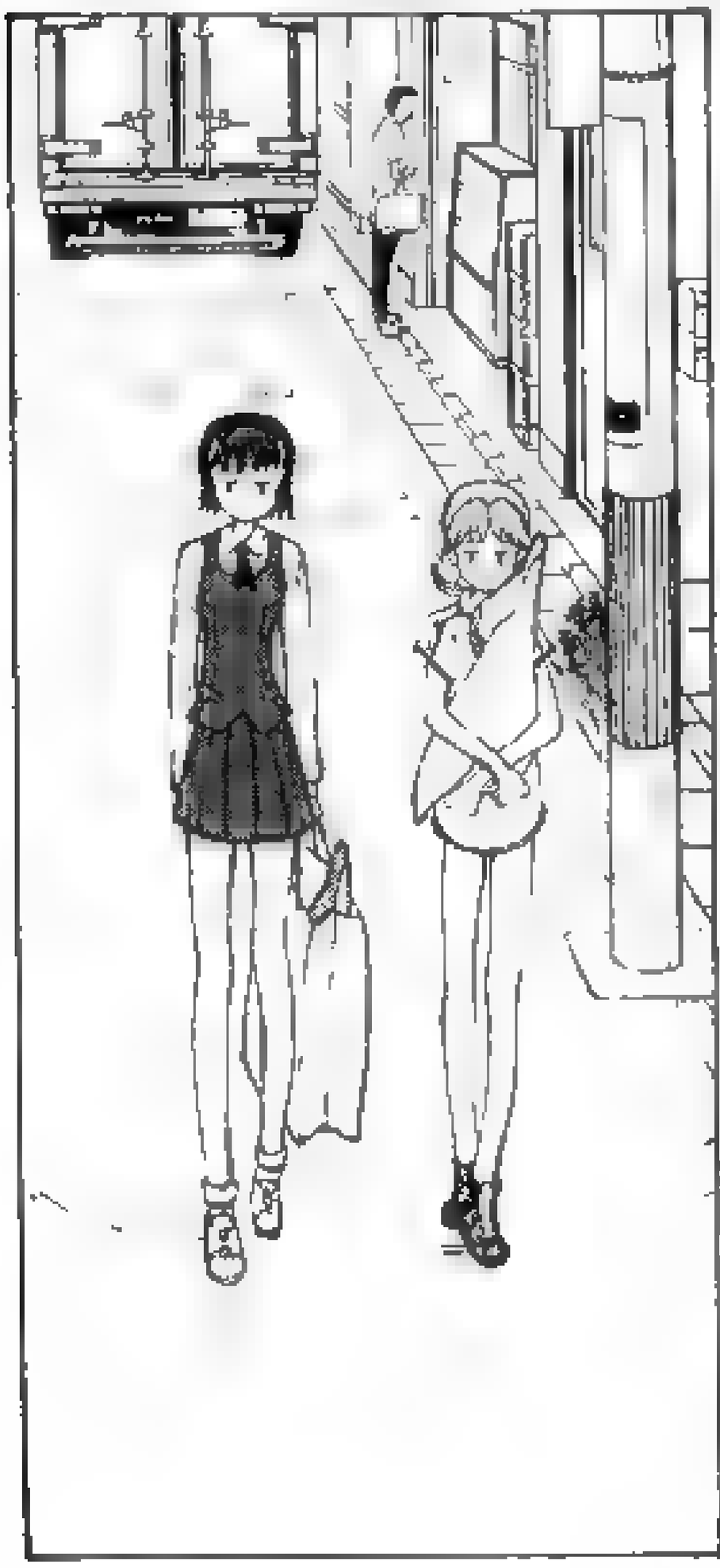


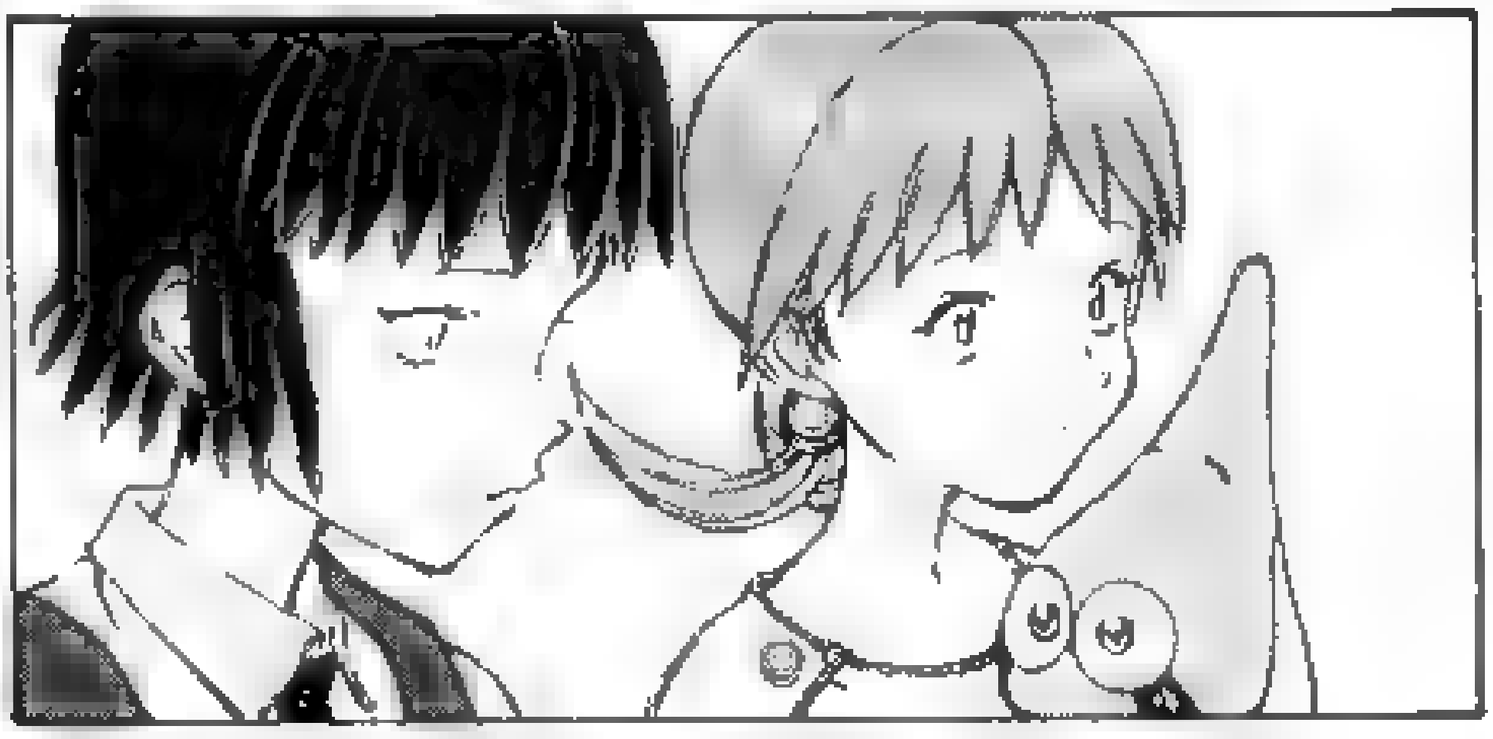


TOBAC









SLCCH
SAKURA

ปฏิ

AH
...?!

A...
AKIRA
...?

ARE...
ARE YOU
ALL
RIGHT?
AKIRA
...?
WHAT'S
WRONG?

N...

NOO!

SMACK

AH?!

KCHAK

HEY, KIDDO! WEL-COME HOME!

YOUR SWORD BATON CLASS RAN LATE ...?

OH, *DADDY!*

DADDY DADDY *DADDY!!*

FWUDD

OOF?!

KAZUYUKI ...?

.....

.....

WHERE AM I GOING...?

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.

I HATE IT WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT...

COUP INCOMPLETE

YOU AREN'T MAKING ANY SENSE! YOU CALL THIS "AN ORDINARY MILITARY EXER-CISE"...?!

THERE WAS NOTHING "ORDINARY" ABOUT IT *AT ALL!!*

THIS WAS SCHEDULED AND APPROVED AS AN *ARMY* GROUND FORCES MANEUVER!

WHY WERE FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT WITH *LIVE AMMUNITION* INVOLVED?!

THOSE PLANES WERE SCRAMBLED FROM CHITOSE AIRBASE!

AND WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH *CHEMICAL WEAPONS?!* ALL OUR STOCKS SHOULD HAVE BEEN DE-STROYED OVER *FIFTY YEARS AGO!!*

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE TOWN OF AMAGA-MORI?!

WE'VE ALSO HEARD THAT TROOPS WERE ON STANDBY FOR RIOT CONTROL! WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THIS? *THE CITIZENS HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW!!*

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DEFENSE?

AH... .....

AS I EXPLAINED IN OUR BRIEFING MEMO...

...WHILE THIS WAS NOT *PLANNED* AS A JOINT FORCES EXERCISE BETWEEN THE *JGSDF* AND *JASDF*...

QUITE A SQUABBLE, ISN'T IT?

YES, IT'S QUITE A SQUABBLE.

QUITE AMUSING, ISN'T IT?

YES, IT'S QUITE AMUSING.

HOW FAR DO YOU THINK THE RESPONSI-BILITY ISSUE WILL GO?

MY GUESS-- DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DEFENSE, ADMINISTRATIVE VICE MINISTER, THE *JGSDF* CHIEF OF STAFF, *JASDF* CHIEF OF STAFF.

AND THE CABI-NET...?

I DON'T KNOW. IT'S A SERIOUS BLUNDER.

THEY'LL HAVE TO TAKE RESPON-SIBILITY.

AH, THE CABINET PROBABLY WON'T RESIGN.

SATO, YOU MUST REALLY HATE THE PRESENT PRIME MINISTER.

HOW ARE OTHER COUNTRIES REACTING?

PRESENTLY, NOTHING.

REALLY...

THE AMERICANS SHOULD KNOW ALL ABOUT IT.

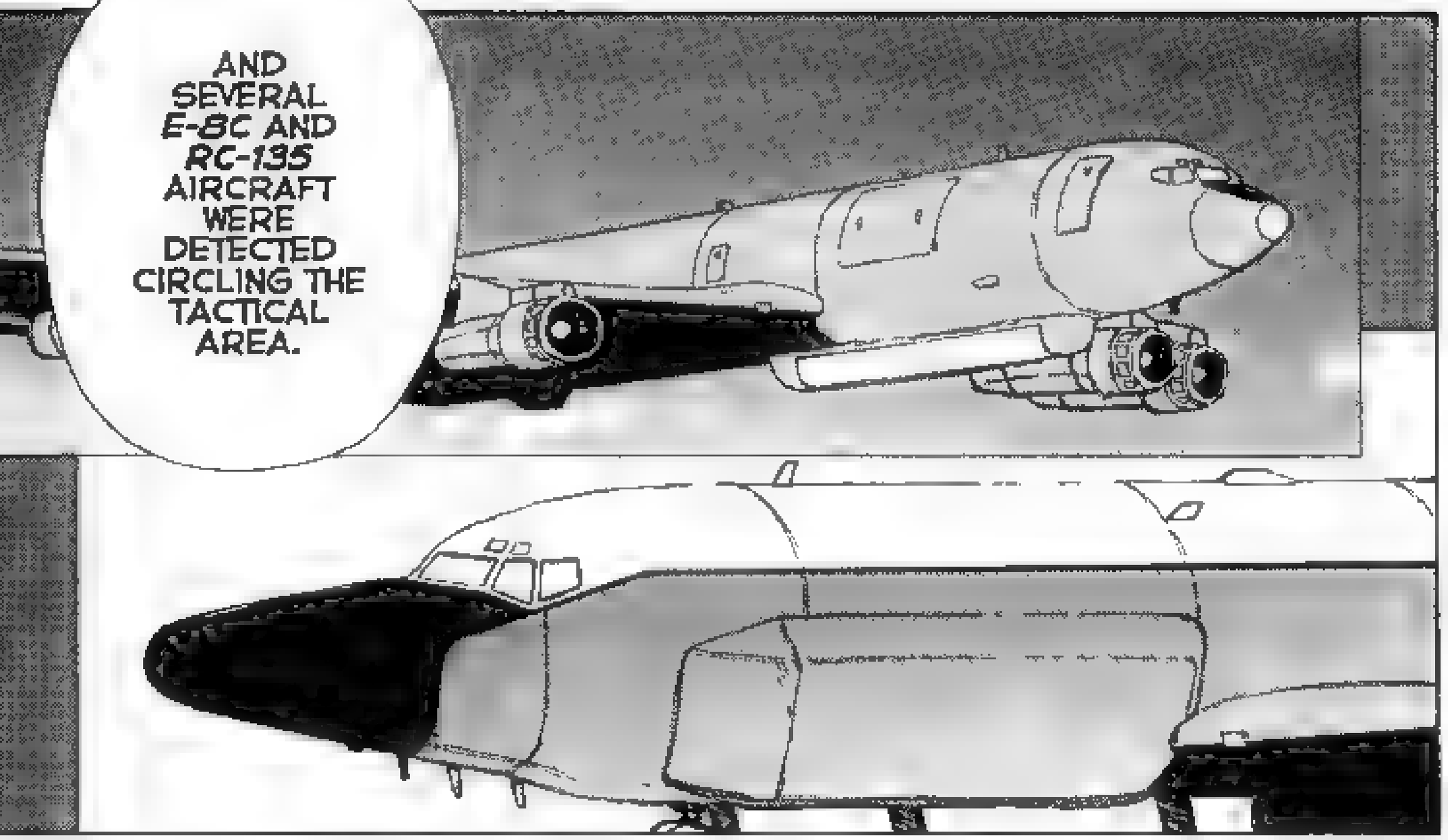
YES. BUT AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE MARINES AT CAMP FUJI DIDN'T REACT AT ALL.

HOW-EVER...

...AN *RC-12* FROM OSAN AIR BASE IN KOREA FLEW INTO ATSUGI...

A NAVY *EP-3E* FROM MISAWA...

AND SEVERAL *E-8C* AND *RC-135* AIRCRAFT WERE DETECTED CIRCLING THE TACTICAL AREA.



HA, HA... PRACTICALLY THE ENTIRE MENAGERIE OF THE U.S.'S SURVEILLANCE AIRCRAFT ON PARADE.

MUST HAVE BEEN A REAL SCRAMBLE.

WELL...THEY'LL SURELY SAY SOMETHING WHEN THE TIME COMES.

WHAT ELSE ...?

WE NEED MORE FOR THE PRESS.

THE PRESENT RELEASE WOULDN'T FOOL A CHILD.

SO...

...WHAT ABOUT THE *COUP D'ETAT* SCENARIO?

STAFF FROM SPECIAL TEAM TWO ARE WORKING ON IT. THEY'LL HAVE A ROUGH DRAFT IN TWO HOURS.

IT'D BE NICE IF WE COULD SEND IT OUT TODAY.

BUT IT'LL SOUND MORE REAL...

...IF WE LET IT "LEAK OUT" AS A RUMOR.

YES. AFTER ALL, THE "COUP PLOTTERS"...

ARE NOW ALL *DEAD.*

BY THE WAY, *JGSDF* GENERAL YOSHII SEEMS TO BE LOSING HIS NERVE.

NOW *THAT* ISN'T GOOD.

HE NEEDS TO STAY IN POSITION UNTIL HE DIES. *THAT'S* HOW HE SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.

YES, THAT IS WHAT THE "THE SPECIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL ON MILITARY BALLOONS" IS FOR.

LOSING CLOSE TO TWO HUNDRED OF HIS MEN MUST HAVE HIT HIM HARD, I GUESS.

SO SMALL A LOSS...

HUH ...?

NOTHING.

WHAT'S WITH THE VICTIMS?

STILL...

...WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THEY'D USE *POISON GAS?*

EIGHTEEN CIVILIANS, ALMOST ALL OF THEM ELDERLY, WERE KILLED OUTRIGHT BY THE GAS.

AT THIS POINT IT LOOKS LIKE WE WON'T HAVE ANY MORE FATALITIES.

SEVERAL OF THOSE BADLY INJURED BY THE *A-10* CRASH ARE TOUCH AND GO, HOWEVER.

"AC," IT SAYS HERE...

THAT'S THE CODE FOR *HYDROGEN CYANIDE*, ISN'T IT?

YES, AND IT'S DEADLY... THOUGH NOT TOO POPULAR THESE DAYS. YOU KNOW WHY?

NO.

EXCELLENT DISPERSION AND LETHALITY... BUT IT'S EASY TO COMPLETELY *CURE*, TOO. NO LONG-TERM EFFECTS.

IN WAR, IT'S IMPORTANT TO KILL, BUT WHAT'S EVEN *MORE* EFFECTIVE...

...IS TO LEAVE THE ENEMY CRIPPLED BUT *ALIVE*. A DEAD MAN ONLY NEEDS BURIAL.

A WOUNDED SOLDIER CAN TAKE UP TO THREE OTHERS OUT OF COMBAT TO CARE FOR HIM.

IN THAT SENSE, AC ISN'T MAXIMALLY EFFECTIVE FOR WARFARE.

SO OUR ENEMIES WERE KIND?

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH THEY THOUGHT IT THROUGH, ACTUALLY.

PERHAPS THEY DON'T CONSIDER THIS WAR.

HAVE YOU HEARD THE FINAL COUNT OF INJURED?

THE LIST IS STILL BEING UP-DATED.

BUT...

WHEN WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT COMPANY MEDICAL CLINICS AND SCHOOL NURSE'S OFFICES, IT'S QUITE A LARGE NUMBER.

CAN'T YOU COME UP WITH A COOLER ANALOGY? LIKE "CARPET-BOMBING"...?

WHO EVEN KNOWS WHAT LICE ARE THESE DAYS...

IT'S ALL THE SAME. MINDLESS PROPA-GANDA.

WE'LL HAVE TO COVER IT UP ANYWAY. THE STAFF ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BUST THEIR ASSES, BUT...

LIKE CRUSHING LICE.

YES?

DID YOU SEE THE IMAGES?

YES.

SO? WHAT ARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS?

FOR EXAMPLE... HOW *OLD*, DO YOU SUPPOSE...?

WELL... UNDER THESE LIGHTING CONDITIONS, AND AT THIS RESOLUTION...

...I CAN'T SPEAK WITH CONFIDENCE, BUT...

JUST GO WITH YOUR INSTINCTS.

I'M READY TO BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU SAY, EVEN IF YOU TELL ME YOU THINK IT'S AN EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD MAN.

A YOUNG GIRL.

PERHAPS... TWELVE YEARS OLD.

GOOD. I THOUGHT SO, TOO.

SATO... SATO...?

MISS AKI SATO...?

HEY...

HOW DO I LOOK?

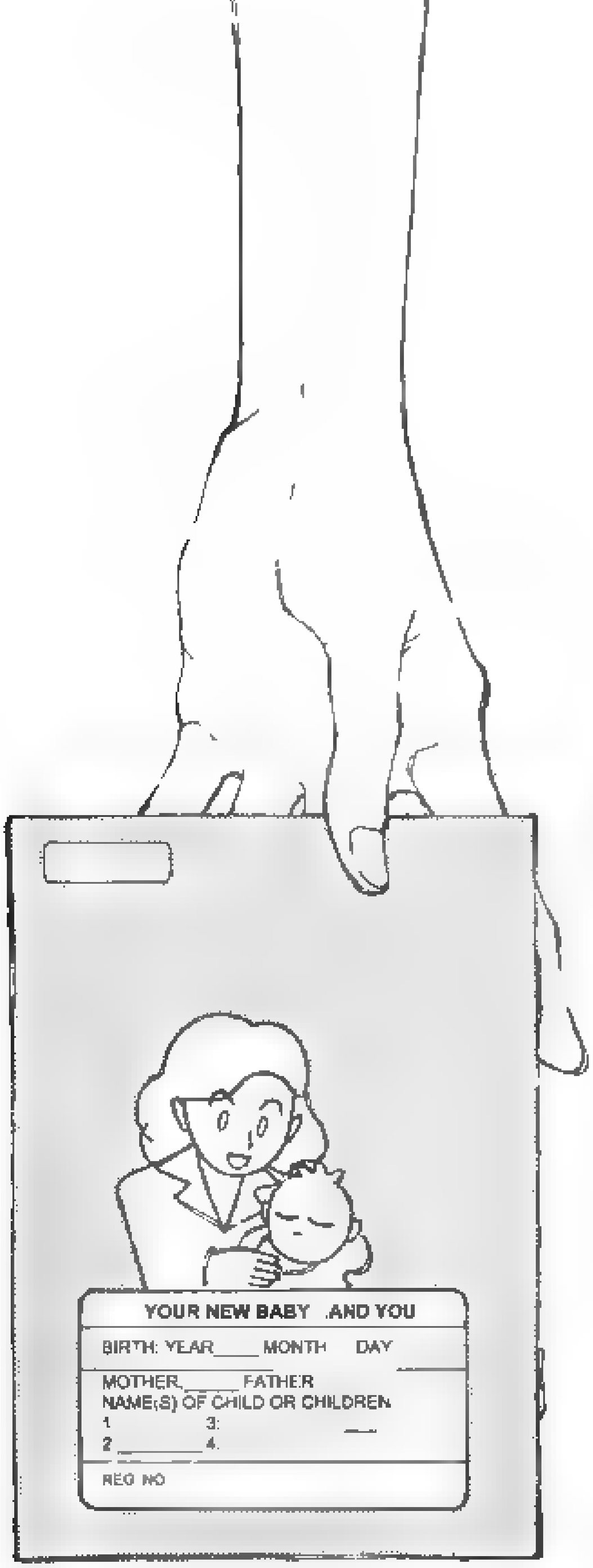
YOU LOOK WONDERFUL, MR. VICE-DIRECTOR MIYAKO.

IN FACT, YOU SHOULD SPEND THE WHOLE DAY LIKE THAT.

I'LL GO MAKE SOME TEA.

TEA...?

TOWARD HOMO DEMENS



YOUR NEW BABY .AND YOU

BIRTH: YEAR_____ MONTH DAY _____

MOTHER_____ FATHER

NAME(S) OF CHILD OR CHILDREN

1 3: ___

2 _____ 4.

REG NO

BRAPP

I SAID TURN IT OFF!! IT'S TOO LOUD!!

DAMN IT, TAKEO!!

BRAPPA

BRAP

BRAPP

KCHK

HEY, HEY!

WHAT'S YOUR PROB-LEM?

I WANT YOU TO *LISTEN* TO ME!!

AH... OKAY, WHAT-EVER.

SO? WHAT'S UP?

I...
....

I'M PREG-NANT.

"WHAT?! THAT PERFECT, *PURE* KANA NOBORITA ...?!"

WOW, AT LEAST FIVE OF THE GUYS IN YOUR CLASS JUST COMMITTED SUICIDE HEARING THAT, KANA.

I'M SERI-OUS!!

SO AM I.

ANYWAY, WOMEN HAVE THAT FUNCTION, SO IT'S BOUND TO HAPPEN SOMETIME, RIGHT?

AND... SO?

"SO" ...?!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SO"...?! WHAT SHOULD I DO?!

HAVE THE CHILD.

I'LL PAY FOR EVERY-THING AND ACCEPT RESPON-SIBILITY AS THE FATHER.

OH, MY GOD...! B...BUT I'M NOT EVEN EIGHTEEN YET!!

HEY, YOU DID WHAT IT TAKES, SO WHY PANIC NOW?

COME ON... IT'S HAPPY NEWS, ISN'T IT?

YOU'RE GOING TO BE A MOTHER.

EEK!

NO, NOOO!! STOP!

B-BUT... MY PARENTS... I...I JUST CAN'T TELL THEM!!

THEN I'LL PHONE THEM FOR YOU. THEY SHOULD BE HOME NOW, RIGHT...?

HAHH

HFF

WHY DO YOU SAY THINGS LIKE THAT?

CAN'T YOU BE MORE *SYMPATHETIC* ...?

HUH? IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, *TOO*... ISN'T IT?

I SAID I'LL TAKE ON MY SHARE.

MY...

MY RESPONSIBILITY...? BUT I'M ONLY *SIXTEEN!*

GIMME A BREAK-- DON'T SUDDENLY START ACTING LIKE A *KID*.

COME ON, KANA.

PAT PAT

GRR!

ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY BECAUSE YOU'RE A LITTLE YOUNGER THAN ME THAT YOU HAVE NO *WILL*? NO *PERSONALITY*? THAT YOU'LL DO *ANYTHING* JUST BECAUSE I TELL YOU?

THINK...EVEN WHEN YOU DO SOMETHING BECAUSE SOMEBODY TOLD YOU TO, YOU'RE STILL THE ONE WHO DECIDES TO DO IT INSTEAD OF REFUSING.

SO IT WAS BY YOUR *OWN* FREE WILL...

...THAT YOU CHOSE YOUR COURSE OF ACTION. WASN'T IT...?

THINKING YOUR PERSONALITY ISN'T COMPLETE UNTIL THE CLOCK TICKS BY SOME ARBITRARY POINT IN TIME...

...AND THINKING THAT IT REDUCES YOUR RESPONSI-BILITY... IT'S QUITE A RIDICULOUS CONCEPT.

OH, YEAH.

BUT THAT'S THE *LAW*, ISN'T IT?

I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

LOOK... THEN...AT LEAST...

...*MARRY ME!*

??

WHY...?

'CAUSE!! D-DON'T YOU *LOVE* ME?!

WELL... YEAH.

I *DO* LIKE YOU, BUT...

...YOU'RE NOT MY *ONLY* GIRL.

KSH

YOU KNOW...?

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR A WOMAN TO HAVE A HUNDRED KIDS...

...BUT A *MAN* CAN DO IT.

AND SO...

I ALREADY HAVE *FIVE.*

FIVE...? OR IS IT SIX?

AND I'LL HAVE TWO MORE BORN NEXT YEAR.

AH... AH... UMM...

HUH!!

R... REALLY?

OH...I ALMOST F-FORGOT. I HAVE AN ENGLISH TEST TO-MORROW.

I BETTER GO... STUDY.

YEAH. S-SEE YA.

I... I'M GOING HOME.

WANT ME TO DRIVE YOU...?

NO.

YOU KNOW... YOU'RE A REAL *JERK*.

AM I...? WHY?

I JUST SPOKE THE TRUTH.

SHOW SOME HUMANITY AND LIE A LITTLE.

AH, BUT I'M *NOT* HUMAN.

I AGREE. YOU ARE AN *ANIMAL*.

MM... WHAT SWEET WORDS YOU SPEAK TO ME!

IT'S JUST A MATTER OF DEFINING THE HUMAN RACE.

ARE THEY *HOMO SAPIENS*... OR *HOMO DEMENS*?

THAT'S JUST BLOOD-LESS *RHET-ORIC*.

YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT.

OH, *HO!* WAIT A SEC...

ARE YOU *JEALOUS*, NORIO?

NO. IN FACT, I REALLY THINK...

...I'M STARTING TO *DESPISE* YOU.

WHEW! THAT'S A RELIEF.

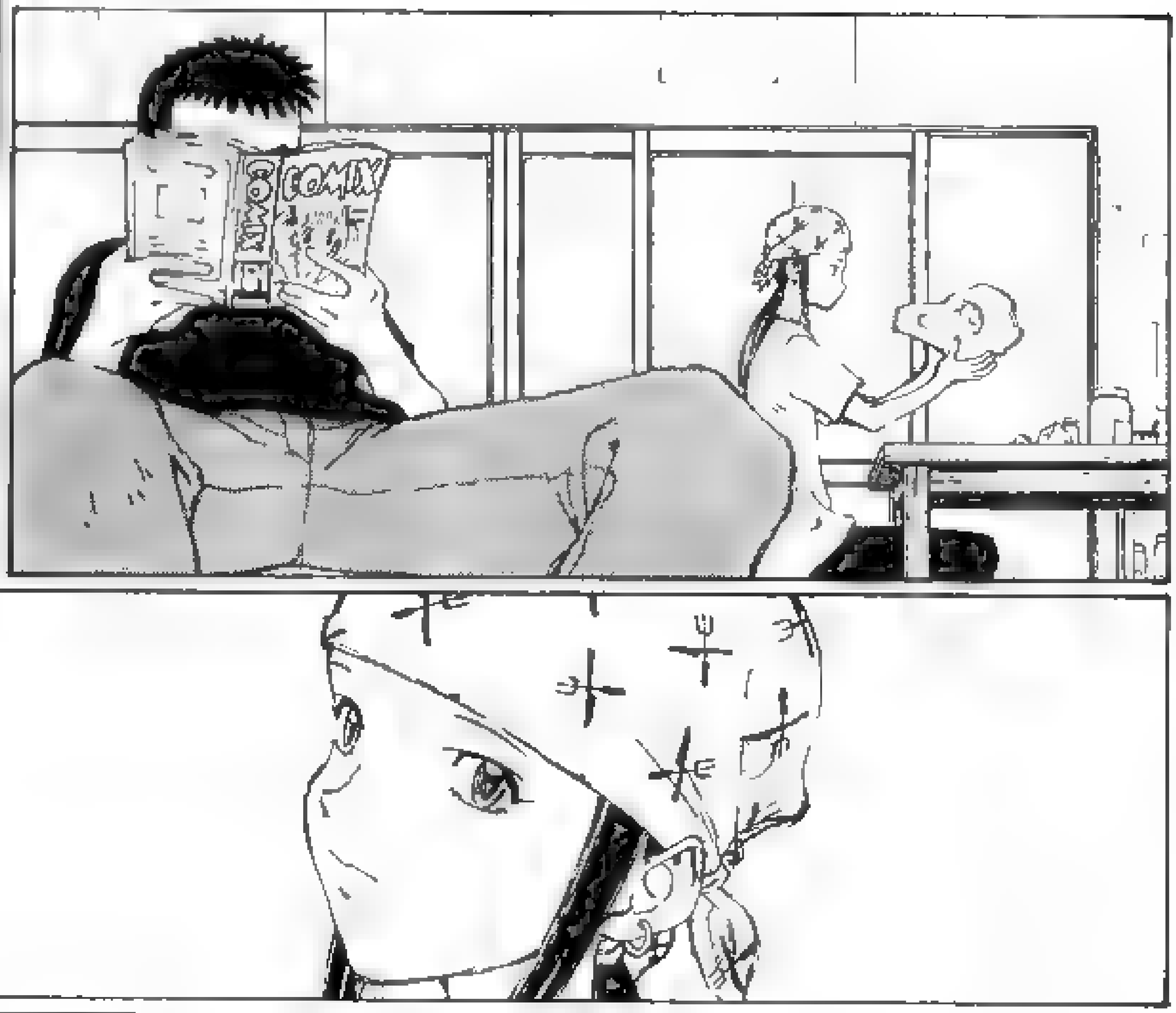
I ONLY LIKE *GIRLS*, ANYWAY.

I'M JUST NOT INTERESTED IN LIFE-FORMS THAT CAN'T BEAR CHILDREN.

HMPH! I THOUGHT PEOPLE LIKE *YOU* GO FOR ANYTHING THAT MOVES.

EVEN IF IT'S NOT "HUMAN."

DON'T MOCK ME.


BOMIX

TAKEO ...?
BOMIX
WELL, WELL. I FIGURED YOU'D COME.

UM...

THANK YOU FOR SAVING US.

NO, THAT WAS NORIO'S *SKELETON DRAGON*...

"OGRE."

DON'T LISTEN TO HIM. IT'S CALLED...

SHAKK

..."NEUTER."

WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS JACKING ME AROUND?

OKAY. *THANK YOU,* NORIO.

DON'T THANK ME. IT'S BECAUSE TAKEO BEGGED AND PLEADED.

AW, DON'T TELL HER—

HE CAN'T EVEN *MOVE* HIS OWN SKELETON DRAGON YET.

UM... .....

I... I'VE GOT A QUES-TION.

ME AND HOSHI-MARU... WE CAN'T...

I MEAN... I CAN'T LINK WITH HIM LIKE AKIRA DOES WITH ENSOF.

IF I COULD DO IT...

...LINK LIKE *THEM*...

THEN I COULD...

I COULD...

.....

SORRY.

BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHY YOU CAN'T, EITHER.

YOU AND YOUR DRAGON CHILD...

WHY...

...YOU TWO CAN'T EN-GAGE...

...THAT'S A PROBLEM YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO SOLVE YOUR-SELF.

SO... YOU WANT *POWER?*

YOU NEED POWER...

WHEN YOU WANT TO *CREATE* SOME-THING.

WHEN YOU WANT TO *PROTECT* SOME-THING.

THAT'S WHEN YOU NEED *POWER.*

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT TO PROTECT?

"TO PRO-TECT" ...?

IS WHAT YOU WANT TO PROTECT TO YOUR LAST BREATH...

...SOME-THING THAT WILL LEAD TO THE FUTURE?

SHIINA...

HAVE YOU EVER FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A BOY?

H...
HUH?

TO BE CONTINUED...

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